



**PROSE AT PRESENT**



# PROSE AT PRESENT

A SELECTION OF EXTRACTS  
FROM MODERN WRITERS

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*I am a lover of these processes of dividing and bringing together, as aids to speech and thought*

Plato, *Phaedrus*, 266b

LONDON  
G. BELL AND SONS LTD

1933

*Printed in Great Britain by The Camelot Press Limited  
London and Southampton*

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

For permission to include extracts from copyright sources thanks are tendered to the Authors (or their Executors) and the Publishers of the following:

Maurice Baring: *Lost Lectures* (Peter Davies); Hilaire Belloc: *Hills and the Sea* (Methuen); Edmund Blunden: *The Face of England* (Longmans Green); Ivor Brown: *Masques and Phases* (Cobden-Sanderson); R. G. Collingwood: *Speculum Mентis* (The Clarendon Press, Oxford); A. E. Coppard: *The Black Dog* (Cape); E. E. Cummings: *The Enormous Room* (Cape); E. M. Forster: *The Celestial Omnibus* (Sidgwick & Jackson); David Garnett: *The Grasshoppers Come* (Chatto & Windus); Ernest Hemingway: *A Farewell to Arms* (Cape); Aldous Huxley: *Those Barren Leaves* (Chatto & Windus); Sir James Jeans: *The Mysterious Universe* (Cambridge University Press); D. H. Lawrence: *The White Peacock* (Duckworth); Percy Lubbock: *Shades of Eton* (Cape); Katherine Mansfield: *The Garden Party* (Constable); C. E. Montague: *The Right Place* (Chatto & Windus); George Moore: *Aphrodite in Aulis* (Heinemann); Charles Morgan: *The Fountain* (Macmillan); Christopher Morley: *Thunder on the Left* (Heinemann); James Stephens: *The Crock of Gold* (Macmillan); Lytton Strachey: *Portraits in Miniature* (Chatto & Windus); *Times Third Leaders* (Edward Arnold); Helen Thomas: *World Without End* (Heinemann); Rebecca West: *Harriet Hume* (Hutchinson); W. B. Yeats: *Essays* (Macmillan); also to *The Times*, for the reprinted leader from *The Times* of May 24, 1932 ("Geneva - Lausanne - Ottawa").

The editor wishes to record his gratitude both to his wife for her constant help throughout the preparation of this volume and to Mr. S. S. Sopwith, of Shrewsbury School, for helpful advice and encouragement.



## INTRODUCTION

**T**HIS book is in the main a study in workmanship. It tries to show how modern prose goes about its work, whatever that work may be. Every writer has his aims, and, consciously or unconsciously, he will lay out his material and handle his tools accordingly. He writes, it may be, to relate, to record, to instruct, to describe, to preach, to meditate, to amuse, to denounce, to ridicule, to plead; to tell of events, to describe connections or to affect the emotions. He has his aims and he has the leisure of the written word and, with its leisure, its responsibility (for, in spite of M. Jourdain, one does not talk prose). What, then, are those aims and how does he set about his work? It is hoped that the perusal and inter-comparison of these extracts and the appended notes may help towards an understanding and even afford some glimpses into the writer's workshop. The notes at the end of the book, which hint rather than explain and contain some intentional omissions, are intended to provide material for discussion rather than instruction. Some readers may object to the method there used; dissection, it has been said, cannot reach the essence of a thing because it kills it in the process. The metaphor is suspiciously muddled (does dissection ever aim at reaching the essence of anything?), and at least, we may reply, it all depends on the dissector; the charm need not vanish from the whole if we do scrutinize the parts, and certainly it is safer to do your dissecting for yourself. Thinking by proxy is a poor enough exercise and it is

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curiosity, which leads to finding things out for yourself, that remains the alpha and omega of education. And it is hoped both that these extracts may be read for their own sake and that they may spur on the reader to seek further familiarity with the authors here represented. The present book merely conveys the invitation and makes the introduction; it is the friendly usher who whispers to the caller what this great man is, introduces him and retires, knowing that, whatever the interview may come to, his own work is done.

### *The Development of Prose*

Considered in one aspect 'Prose' is a negative label; when we affix it to a composition it implies that that composition is not Poetry or Verse. History, at first sight, would appear to bear out this negative conception, because in all literatures Poetry came first and Prose second. But considered absolutely the term 'Prose' suggests some very positive characteristics. To-day we expect of Prose two all-important qualities – Precision and Directness. True, it might be argued that these again are relative terms, that they serve merely to differentiate Prose from Poetry; that Precision is the fundamental quality of Prose just because it is not the fundamental quality of Poetry and that Directness means simply the freedom from form which Poetry by its very nature does not desire. Yet logically, if not historically – for of that there can be no proof – these essentials, Precision and Directness, are the primary requirements of human expression, and Prose itself would seem to represent the core of reason necessary for the best human activity. Though with primitive man, then, Prose may be said to be latent in the expression of all the practical needs of his life, as opposed to the Poetry which is the voice of his passions

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and superstitions, it is never elevated to the level of Poetry because its operation is merely mechanical. A good servant is unobtrusive and, in respect of his particular excellence, impersonal. But to produce literature you must be conscious of the form of what you are saying as well as of the substance. In early literature this consciousness takes the form of using certain fixed patterns and repetitions, in order to lull the listener into a hypnotic state detached from that of normal experience and so to make him receptive of the poet's magic. These patterns became rhythms and rhymes and remain the external characteristics of poetry to this day. But the word 'poetry' itself means 'composition' without any restriction to verse: the name was given at a time when all composition was in the form of verse and Prose as a literary form was not yet evolved. Historically the process of literary evolution seems to have been as follows; first there existed the un-self-conscious utterance in which the words were allowed to tumble out just as they came; then Poetry established itself as a self-conscious mode of expression distinct from the un-self-conscious utterance, which continued to serve the ordinary needs of everyday life; then this un-self-conscious utterance was itself extended into a second literary form and so gave birth to Prose. Thus, while it is true that the un-self-conscious utterance preceded both Poetry and Prose, it is more nearly related to Prose, which is its direct descendant, than to Poetry, which was a deliberate departure from it.

It took a long time for men to discover that metre and logic do not naturally walk hand in hand and that, if they are compelled to do so, it is so much the worse for logic. Gradually the un-self-conscious utterance thrust itself upon the attention of its master and won its emancipation. The emergence of Prose meant simply

that you could be conscious of the form of your utterance without artificially restricting it; the epic must stop in the last foot of the last hexameter, but the prose period can go on as long as the speaker is prepared to take breath. The advantages of this unrestricted form are obvious; it made for perception, where poetry made for emotion, for rationality where poetry served passion, for the objective truth where poetry was beleaguered with the personal and the subjective; in a word, for a coolness unknown to the heat of poetry, but yet necessary for the normal conduct of life. All the same it took a long time for prose to shed the encumbrances of poetry; in England it took more than two centuries. Sir Philip Sidney, Sir Thomas Browne, Milton, Jeremy Taylor, all wrote fine prose, but its chief excellence is not the excellence of prose but of poetry. Consider this from John Donne (1573-1631):

'It comes equally to us all, and makes us all equal when it comes. The ashes of an Oak in the Chimney are no Epitaph of that Oak to tell me what flocks it sheltered while it stood, nor what men it hurt when it fell. The dust of great persons' graves is speechless too, it says nothing, it distinguishes nothing; as soon as the dust of a wretch whom thou wouldest not, as of a Prince thou couldest not look upon, will trouble thine eyes, if the wind blow it thither; and when a whirlwind hath blown the dust of the Churchyard into the Church, and the man sweeps out the dust of the Church into the Churchyard, who will undertake to sift those dusts again, and to pronounce, This is the Patrician, this the Plebeian bran?' (From *Eighty Sermons, Sermon XV.*)

Or this from Sir Thomas Browne (1605-1682):

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'Now since these dead bones have already outlasted the living ones of Methuselah, and in a yard under Ground, and thin Walls of Clay, outworn all the strong and specious buildings above it, and quietly rested under the drums and tramplings of three Conquests; What Prince can promise such diuturnity unto his Relics, or might not gladly say,

*Sic ego componi versus in ossa velim?*

Time which antiquates Antiquities, and hath an art to make dust of all things, hath yet spared these minor Monuments. In vain we hope to be known by open and visible Conservatories, when to be unknown was the means of their continuation, and obscurity their protection.' (From *Urn Burial*.)

Both the extracts breathe the charm of poetry and use its artifices, the playing with words, the trimming of clauses to predetermined lengths, the sustained tropes, the melodious lilt; both are finely-wrought. Donne was by nature a poet, and his prose is at its best when it follows the discipline of poetry. It would be an interesting exercise to write out these extracts according to their rhythms and antitheses; we should then see how near poetry they are. There is just one great characteristic which distinguishes such prose from poetry, and that is the flexibility of its rhythms.

The question immediately arises whether there can be said to be any definite boundary between the realms of poetry and prose. The answer must be that there is not. But at least we can postulate two extreme poles as it were in the scale of literary composition, Poetry and Prose, and between these two there may be said to lie a tract in which on the one side there is the poetry that approximates to prose and on the other side the

prose that approximates to poetry. Can we then postulate the existence of a neutral prose standard, a common ration, so to speak, for which each author according to his gifts will provide a relish? At first sight when we think of the prose of official and merely utilitarian communications, of Bradshaw and Baedeker, we may be tempted to say Yes. But when we apply the same idea to poetry, which, if we are to think of poetry and prose as equals is only fair – it will at once appear absurd that there could be a neutral standard of poetry. We may seek the lowest common factors if we wish – and these will be the barest and least individual ideas that start the process of composition that results in the finished piece – and even so it is doubtful whether in literature such ideas are capable of satisfactory separation from the process which they are said to occasion; but the search for a common standard is futile. 'Common' is the snag; when a man sits down to write upon a certain subject in prose, one can imagine a sort of ideal Fair Copy floating above his head which he is striving to realize, but the character of that ideal will be determined by the particular purpose of the individual author. What we can say is that a certain piece of prose contains more or less of the essentials of prose, Precision, Directness, Flexibility, than other pieces. A passage of Swift (see Appendix II) or Southey or Defoe goes so straight and soberly to its mark and affords so little entertainment by the way that its excellence is not at first sight obvious. Just as Pericles said that the best woman was she who was least talked of whether for good or ill, so we may say that the best prose style is that which is in itself least conspicuous while it goes about its work.

There is abroad in the present age a mistaken idea of what constitutes good prose. Modern anthologies

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have more than once revealed the fact that their compilers appreciate only one form of prose, the purple-patch style, and acclaim prose according as it approximates to poetry. This is a dangerous attitude; it inculcates the habit of bedizening a simple speech or description with artificial poetic charms and, worse still, encourages an unhealthy emotionalism. Some prose is born in the purple (most of the Authorized Version of the Bible will serve as illustration), but too much has the purple thrust upon it. It is a far cry from the Bible's '*Thou art the shadow of a great rock in a thirsty land*' to the modern novelist with whom an oil-lamp set amid crockery on a farmhouse table becomes '*a fat tonsured priest surrounded by the meek and mild*.' Too often in reading an author we are conscious of 'fine writing' without getting any deeper; often there is little beneath it. It is not that we would debar poetic prose from the province of prose, even though the simple, masculine prose has a better claim to the title. Why should not prose work on the emotions, if it wishes to and can? Most oratory appeals to the emotions. Is it any the less prose for that? At least if such prose is discredited, merely because it is emotive, and not because it tries to be emotive and fails, then literature will be the poorer. The range of prose is in truth infinite, and within that range both the prose of emotion and the plain prose of description have their place. In the last resort the measure of a writer's success depends upon the appreciation of his purpose.

### *Prose and Sound*

We may mention here Prose Rhythm since it has played an important part in the development of prose. In poetry rhythm is the very life-breath, and the

reader should be deeply conscious of it; in prose rhythm is not so obvious. Yet in all word-making rhythm is instinctive, for the meaning of a word is almost inseparable from its sound. Obviously for practical purposes the meaning is everything and the sound incidental; but since life is not wholly practical but always in some degree also aesthetic, the sound is important. It attracts the listener and holds his attention and so helps the meaning. Meaning must be master and sound must be servant; yet they work together. We think in words and in those few fractions of seconds between the growth of an idea in the writer's mind and his setting it down on paper, sound plays its part and rhythm is engendered. Sound-patterns and letter-weaving may be as effective in prose as they are in poetry; consider, for example, the value of the sounds in Job's '*There the wicked cease from troubling, and there the weary be at rest*' (especially the air of finality produced by the final dentals), or in the Prayer Book's '*His one oblation of himself once offered.*'

Now rhythm, which means 'flow,' exists in single words scarcely more than musical melody can be said to exist in single notes. Some words may sound more pleasant to the ear than others: apart from the image involved, 'pool' is a more pleasing word than 'splash; but it is only in appropriate settings that such single words realize their full sound value. See how vital a word 'wide' becomes in Keats's '*Noiseless as fear in a wide wilderness*' or in Housman's '*And the darkness hushes wide.*' As in poetry so in prose, rhythm consists of the voice's motion over stressed and unstressed syllables, and the rhythm will be effective according as the sounds of those syllables coincide with the voice's stress (compare the lines just quoted). Rhythm in itself is quantitative; sound gives it quality. To

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consider the various types of rhythm and melody in English prose falls beyond the scope of this work. But there are two main groups into which rhythms fall, and we may consider these. It will be best to start with examples. This is from Isaiah (A.V.):

‘Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people; but the Lord shall rise upon thee, and His glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. The sun shall be no more thy light by day, neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee; but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory.’

Read this to yourself and, if you like, mark the stresses, for they are obvious. Then take for contrast this passage from a writer of the same age: here is Hamlet speaking:

‘I have of late – but wherefore I know not – lost all my mirth, forgone all custom of exercise; and indeed it goes so heavily with my disposition that this goodly frame, the Earth, seems to me a sterile promontory; this most excellent Canopy, the Air, look you, this brave o’erhanging Firmament, this Majestical Roof fretted with golden fire, why, it appears no other thing to me than a foul and pestilential congregation of vapours.’

You will have seen that where the A.V. uses homely, simple words, Shakespeare uses long, Latin words and that the run of the first piece is slow and solemn with the stresses frequent and well-marked, while the run of the second is more fluent, and the rhythms more intricate and elusive; while the first treads ponderously

on earth, the second soars brilliantly to the clouds. Both are effective, both express admirably a definite purpose. How far the difference in the music of these passages is the difference between Teuton and Romantic diction is a fascinating question which we cannot here pursue. This broad difference is maintained in the prose of to-day: here is a piece of Sacheverell Sitwell, from *The Gothick North*:

‘All day they would journey, until the setting sun made the air to glow like a damp fire, burning the eyes while it chilled the body. The moon, like a disc of copper, hung behind them, and the plain seemed dead. All life had fled from it, and there was nothing but thick brushwood.’

— and here are a few lines from Edward Thomas’s *Heart of England*:

‘At such an hour, when the casements of all the senses are opened wide upon eternity, this perfume not only satisfies the desiring and aspiring sense, but, with all its unsearched, undiscovered powers, builds for us here upon the shore a specular tower and, more, a palace lovely and shadowy, where the mind roves slowly and at ease, saluting vaguely apprehended shapes, finding now long lost memories of men and things which time has locked against a thousand keys, and now bold hopes and unexpected consolations.’

Or read the Belloc extract and then a few lines of George Moore or W. B. Yeats, and you will see the difference. Rarely, of course, do authors confine themselves to the one group of rhythms or the other, almost all use a variety and blend of rhythms; yet this fundamental difference remains.

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### *Prose as the Expression of an Age*

We noticed above how closely the prose of Donne and Sir Thomas Browne approaches the condition of poetry. That was because in their age the predominant literary mould was verse. In the Elizabethan age prose was a very splendid business, but too often its splendour is a reflected light, and blank verse remained the finer instrument. So too it was with the Jacobeans (not only Donne and Browne, but Milton, Taylor, Bunyan, to mention the greater names). It was perhaps not until the age of Swift that prose asserted its true nature, though in Hyde (the historian of the Civil War), Dryden and Defoe this development was foreshadowed. The eighteenth century was predominantly an age of prose and from that time prose has never looked back. Though the nineteenth century saw a strong revival of poetry, the end of the century saw a relapse from which it has scarcely recovered at the present day. I say relapse in a quantitative sense, in reference to the wideness of appeal; in point of quality poetry in certain quarters still flourishes, but the audience it can command is smaller to-day than it has ever been before.

If we consider their purpose and not the means which they use to fulfil that purpose, there is in practice no essential difference between poetry and prose. Shakespeare and Shaw both write drama, but the one uses poetry, the other prose: Tennyson and Mallory took in hand the narration of the same legends, the one in verse, the other in prose: in satire there is Juvenal and there is Swift; even philosophy shows the same diversity — Lucretius can stand beside Darwin, and the *Testament of Beauty* besides Croce's *Estetica*. It will be seen that in each pair different ages are represented; for, though a Pope and a Swift may be contemporaries, in

most ages for each purpose one form will predominate. What Dickens was to his age, Ben Jonson was to his: the true peer of Hardy in the Elizabethan age is not Llyly or Sidney, but Shakespeare; in C. E. Montague the lyric joy of Pindar has turned to prose. Literature as much as clothes is subject to fashions, and it may happen that in certain ages writers under the stress of convention work in an alien medium: Massinger was no more at home in poetry than Donne was in prose: even in our own times we have Synge writing prose that is all but poetry and Siegfried Sassoon satirical poetry that is all but prose.

To-day Poetic drama has disappeared and the novel has taken its place. In another age Aldous Huxley might well have been writing rhyming couplets and Christopher Morley blank verse. In our time prose is predominant; prose represents common sense and in the modern world is more generally acceptable; but if in turning from poetry we rid ourselves of the bogeys of false sentiment and cant, we are at the same time losing a wonderful field for passionate expression. We mentioned above 'wideness of appeal' as a criterion of literary strength. Applying it here we see that to-day a novel will appeal (in differing degrees) to all levels of the public; poetry will not. For in the main the popular taste for prose to-day is sincere and healthy; the popular taste for poetry is assuredly not. Prose is accepted unconsciously as the direct medium of expression; poetry is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of affectation; it is sentiment bought and not felt. The average reader of the novel will accept the words of its characters and its author's descriptions as true to experience, as belonging to the world of life, but he will never give the poet credit for saying what he means or for saying it in that way because he could not

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help it. Rather he will acclaim the poet's performance as a pretty trick, at best a luxury: the poet is the circus pony in a world where the important equine activities are usurped by prose. He will not demand logic or depth from poetry, he will not think out the meaning: and so he will in this province accept that kind of composition which will not bear looking into, a piece which may be muddled in thought and artificial in feeling if only it has a few of the stock poetic words and devices. And where poetry recedes prose advances and in its advance is happy to borrow many properties which its rival has left behind.

### *The Twentieth Century*

The Victorian era was the age of Authority, of oracles and of bowing down before them. In all departments of human activity the expert was supreme. The general attitude of the age was one of acceptance: it deified Peace and Dignity and canonized Orthodoxy and Respectability: it was so anxious to have its mind made up that rather than ask disturbing questions it preferred to have its mind made up for it from outside. The long period of national peace bred a national complacency. England saw herself

*A land of settled government,  
A land of just and old renown,  
Where Freedom slowly broadens down  
From precedent to precedent.*

The placid exterior, the united front was everything, the inside of the cup was rarely examined. Hence the Pharisaical tinge in Tennyson, the sickly sweetness of Ruskin, the flatulent mouthings of a Swinburne, the medicine-man pomposity of a Carlyle. This complacency took the form of an infinite satisfaction with.

all institutions and of an infinite faith in their stability. In the long summer afternoon of Victorianism time almost stood still. There were a few voices in the nineteenth century itself that were raised against the hypocrisy of their age: Samuel Butler, the author of *Erewhon* was one and Meredith was another; but it was only with the turn of the century and with the Boer War that a real strain of self-criticism appeared. Its exponents were, chiefly, Shaw and, a little later, H. G. Wells. The old institutions were examined, their authorities were challenged; the dangers of collectivist thinking were revealed. It was shown that the individual must fight his own battle with the problems of social existence. Even in literature which is less obviously militant revaluations of old standards were implied – in Arnold Bennett for example, and novelists of his school and, later, in John Galsworthy, though his attitude has not been so consistent. The Edwardian period saw this new challenging outlook slowly developing: it saw, among other things, the emancipation of Woman and the rise of the Labour Party. The European War of 1914–1918, when it came, accelerated the process. There is no real cleavage between the Edwardian and the post-war period; the cleavage is rather between the Victorian age and twentieth century. The war reinforced the scepticism of the years before it and in some quarters turned it into cynicism. Where the Edwardian thinkers had decried the old institutions, the post-war generation tend to decry all institutions. Edwardian criticism was based on the vision of an ideal; the critics of the last decade have too often envisaged nothing but chaos (witness the work of Aldington, Graves and Hemingway). The last fragments of the Victorian idols have been demolished, and reconstruction has not yet begun. Of

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course there is the traditionalist background in literature as in other spheres, but the intellectualists are at the moment in the ranks of despair. I say ranks, for it is the unconscious unanimity of these disillusionists that is the most hopeful augury for the future. Rebels who band together are not rebels by principle, absolute rebels, but rebels against a particular system, and their faces are set not towards anarchy but towards reform. To the true anarchist brotherhood is unknown.

It is a self-conscious age and autopsists have not been lacking. A good writer is in the last resort always himself and rises above all classification; yet he is also inevitably the child of his age, confessing spiritual and literary allegiances, a shareholder in a world not of his own making. So true is this that prose-writings especially in modern times will furnish the most obvious index to the spirit of the age. In spite of all common properties there is, as we have shown, a significant difference of outlook and tone that separates the work of Aldous Huxley and D. H. Lawrence, for example, from that of Arnold Bennett and H. G. Wells. In short, the post-war period has produced in literature a degree of outspokenness and realism hitherto unknown — so much so that some critics' estimate of this period read like Thucydides's description of the Plague.

In method, too, there have been marked developments, the most striking, perhaps, that due to new interest in psychology and psycho-analysis. This has given us the 'stream of consciousness' novel and, as a corollary, has led to a neglect of character-drawing (for character-drawing requires an arbitrary selection of detail and incident such as the psychological method, preoccupied with the mechanics of the mind, is not prepared to exercise). This method may be seen at its

best in the novels of Dorothy Richardson and in the work of the French writer Marcel Proust; at its extreme in that of James Joyce. This new introspective-ness, in due measure, serves as a corrective to the tendency, so well marked in the old-fashioned novel, to be content with the external shell of life and to ignore the emotional activities beneath. In direct contrast with this subjectivity, in some writers the awareness of scientific progress has tended to produce a striving for objectivity and, generally, has done much to discredit many forms of sentimentalism. It is noteworthy that the best novelists of to-day are more impersonal than novelists of other periods and tend to leave their private inclinations unexpressed (in this respect compare, for example, David Garnett, Virginia Woolf or H. E. Bates with John Galsworthy and H. G. Wells). Other developments may be attributed to the influence of other artistic media—modernist schools of painting, music, the films. There are styles which have carried rebellion into a revolt from traditional syntax and sentence-making. But these new styles have, for the most part, scarcely yet emerged from the stage of experiment, and there remains no lack of sober, precise English writing to reassure us of the continuity and solidity of the good tradition. The 'age' is, indeed, in style by no means so clear-cut as some commentators would have us believe; whatever new departures the post-war period has seen, the lines of continuity are stronger than the forces of disintegration. Some of the authors here represented are already dead, a few of these books were published well before the war, but the march of literature has not outstepped them, as it has outstepped even younger writers than these, and they can take their place as worthy contributors to Prose at Present.

## I

A. E. COPPARD

## LUXURY

EIGHT o'clock of a fine spring morning in the hamlet of Kezzal Predy Peter, great horses with chains clinking down the road, and Alexander Finkle rising from his bed singing: 'O lah soh doh, soh lah me doh,' timing his notes to the ching of his neighbour's anvil. He boils a cupful of water on an oil stove, his shaving brush stands (where it always stands) upon the window-ledge ('Soh lah soh do-o-o-oh, soh doh soh la-a-a-ah !') but as he addresses himself to his toilet the clamour of the anvil ceases and then Finkle too becomes silent, for the unresting cares of his life begin again to afflict him.

'This cottage is no good,' he mumbles, 'and I'm no good. Literature is no good when you live too much on porridge. Your writing's no good, sir, you can't get any glow out of oatmeal. Why did you ever come here? It's a hopeless job and you know it!' Stropping his razor petulantly as if the soul of that frustrating oatmeal lay there between the leather and the blade, he continues: 'But it isn't the cottage, it isn't me, it isn't the writing – it's the privation. I must give it up and get a job as a railway porter.'

And indeed he was very impoverished, the living he derived from his writings was meagre; the cottage had many imperfections, both its rooms were gloomy, and

to obviate the inconvenience arising from its defective roof he always slept downstairs.

Two years ago he had been working for a wall-paper manufacturer in Bethnal Green. He was not poor then, not so very poor, he had the clothes he stood up in (they were good clothes) and fifty pounds in the bank besides. But although he had served the wall-paper man for fifteen years that fifty pounds had not been derived from clerking, he had earned it by means of his hobby, a little knack of writing things for provincial newspapers. On his thirty-first birthday Finkle argued – for he had a habit of conducting long and not unsatisfactory discussions between himself and a self that apparently wasn't him – that what he could do reasonably well in his scanty leisure could be multiplied exceedingly if he had time and opportunity, lived in the country, somewhere where he could go into a garden to smell the roses or whatever was blooming and draw deep draughts of happiness, think his profound thoughts and realise the goodness of God, and then sit and read right through some long and difficult book about Napoleon or Mahomet. Bursting with literary ambition Finkle had hesitated no longer: he could live on nothing in the country – for a time. He had the fifty pounds, he had saved it, it had taken him seven years, but he had made it and saved it. He handed in his notice. That was very astonishing to his master, who esteemed him, but more astonishing to Finkle was the parting gift of ten pounds which the master had given him. The workmen, too, had collected more money for him, and bought for him a clock, a monstrosity, it weighed twelve pounds and had a brass figure of Lohengrin on the top, while the serene old messenger man who cleaned the windows and bought surreptitious beer for the clerks gave him a prescription for the

instantaneous relief of a painful stomach ailment. 'It might come in handy,' he had said. That was two years ago, and now just think! He had bought himself an inkpot of crystalline glass – a large one, it held nearly half a pint – and two pens, one for red ink and one for black, besides a quill for signing his name with. Here he was at 'Pretty Peter' and the devil himself was in it! Nothing had ever been right, the hamlet itself was poor. Like all places near the chalk hills its roads were of flint, the church was of flint, the farms and cots of flint with brick corners. There was an old milestone outside his cot, he was pleased with that, it gave the miles to London and the miles to Winchester, it was nice to have a milestone there like that – your very own.

He finished shaving and threw open the cottage door; the scent of wallflowers and lilac came to him as sweet almost as a wedge of newly cut cake. The may bloom on his hedge drooped over the branches like cruddled cream, and the dew in the gritty road smelled of harsh dust in a way that was pleasant. Well, if the cottage wasn't much good, the bit of a garden was all right.

There was a rosebush too, a little vagrant in its growth. He leaned over his garden gate; there was no one in sight. He took out the fire shovel and scooped up a clot of manure that lay in the road adjacent to his cottage and trotted back to place it in a little heap at the root of those scatter-brained roses, pink and bulging, that never seemed to do very well and yet were so satisfactory.

'Nicish day,' remarked Finkle, lolling against his doorpost, 'but it's always nice if you are doing a good day's work. The garden is all right, and literature is all right, and life's all right – only I live too much on

porridge. It isn't the privation itself, it's the things privation makes a man do. It makes a man do things he ought not want to do, it makes him mean, it makes him feel mean, I tell you, and if he feels mean and thinks mean he writes meanly, that's how it is.'

He had written topical notes and articles, stories of gay life (of which he knew nothing), of sport (of which he knew less), a poem about 'hope,' and some cheerful pieces for a girls' weekly paper. And yet his outgoings still exceeded his income, painfully and perversely after two years. It was terrifying. He wanted success, he had come to conquer — not to find what he *had* found. But he would be content with encouragement now even if he did not win success; it was absolutely necessary, he had not sold a thing for six months, his public would forget him, his connection would be gone.

'There's no use though,' mused Finkle, as he scrutinized his worn boots, 'in looking at things in detail, that's mean; a large view is the thing. Whatever is isolated is bound to look alarming.'

But he continued to lean against the doorpost in the full blaze of the stark, almost gritty sunlight, thinking mournfully until he heard the porridge in the saucepan begin to bubble. Turning into the room he felt giddy, and scarlet spots and other phantasmagoria waved in the air before him.

Without an appetite he swallowed the porridge and ate some bread and cheese and watercress. Watercress, at least, was plentiful there, for the little runnels that came down from the big hills expanded in the Preddy Peter fields and in their shallow bottoms the cress flourished.

He finished his breakfast, cleared the things away, and sat down to see if he could write, but it was in vain — he could not write. He could think, but his

mind would embrace no subject, it just teetered about with the objects within sight, the empty, disconsolate grate, the pattern of the rug, and the black butterfly that had hung dead upon the wall for so many months. Then he thought of the books he intended to read but could never procure, the books he had procured but did not like, the books he had liked but was already, so soon, forgetting. Smoking would have helped and he wanted to smoke, but he could not afford it now. If ever he had a real good windfall he intended to buy a tub, a little tub it would have to be of course, and he would fill it to the bung with cigarettes, full to the bung, if it cost him pounds. And he would help himself to one whenever he had a mind to do so.

'Bah, you fool!' he murmured, 'you think you have the whole world against you, that you are fighting it, keeping up your end with heroism! Idiot! What does it all amount to? You've withdrawn yourself from the world, run away from it, and here you sit making futile dabs at it, like a child sticking pins into a pudding and wondering why nothing happens. What *could* happen? What? The world doesn't know about you, or care, you are useless. It isn't aware of you any more than a chain of mountains is aware of a gnat. And whose fault is that - is it the mountains' fault? Idiot! But I can't starve and I must go and get a job as a railway porter, it's all I'm fit for.'

Two farmers paused outside Finkle's garden and began a solid conversation upon a topic that made him feel hungry indeed. He listened, fascinated, though he was scarcely aware of it.

'Six-stone lambs,' said one, 'are fetching three pounds apiece.'

'Ah!'

‘I shall eat some.’

‘Myself I don’t care for lamb, never did care.’

‘It’s good eating.’

‘Ah, but I don’t care for it. Now we had a bit of spare rib last night off an old pig. ’Twas cold, you know, but beautiful. I said to my dame: “What can mortal man want better than spare rib off an old pig? Tender and white, ate like lard.” ’

‘Yes, it’s good eating.’

‘Nor veal, I don’t like – nothing that’s young.’

‘Veal’s good eating.’

‘Don’t care for it, never did, it eats short to my mind.’

Then the school bell began to ring so loudly that Finkle could hear no more, but his mind continued to hover over the choice of lamb or veal or old pork until he was angry. Why had he done this foolish thing, thrown away his comfortable job, reasonable food, ease of mind, friendship, pocket money, tobacco? Even his girl had forgotten him. Why had he done this impudent thing, it was insanity surely? But he knew that man has instinctive reasons that transcend logic, what a parson would call the superior reason of the heart.

‘I wanted a change, and I got it. Now I want another change, but what shall I get? Chance and change, they are the sweet features of existence. Chance and change, and not too much prosperity. If I were an idealist I could live from my hair upwards.’

The two farmers separated. Finkle staring haplessly from his window saw them go. Some schoolboys were playing a game of marbles in the road there. Another boy sat on the green bank quietly singing, while one in spectacles knelt slyly behind him trying to burn a hole in the singer’s breeches with a

magnifying glass. Finkle's thoughts still hovered over the flavours and satisfactions of veal and lamb and pig until, like mother Hubbard, he turned and opened his larder.

There, to his surprise, he saw four bananas lying on a saucer. Bought from a travelling hawker a couple of days ago they had cost him threepence half-penny. And he had forgotten them ! He could not afford another luxury like that for a week at least, and he stood looking at them, full of doubt. He debated whether he should take one now, he would still have one left for Wednesday, one for Thursday, and one for Friday. But he thought he would not, he had had his breakfast and he had not remembered them. He grew suddenly and absurdly angry again. That was the worst of poverty, not what it made you endure, but what it made you *want* to endure. Why shouldn't he eat a banana - why shouldn't he eat all of them ? And yet bananas always seemed to him such luxuriant, expensive things, so much peel, and then two, or not more than three, delicious bites. But if he fancied a banana - there it was. No, he did not want to destroy the blasted thing ! No reason at all why he should not, but that was what continuous hardship did for you, nothing could stop this miserable feeling for economy now. If he had a thousand pounds at this moment he knew he would be careful about bananas and about butter and about sugar and things like that; but he would never have a thousand pounds, nobody had ever had it, it was impossible to believe that anyone had ever had wholly and entirely to themselves a thousand pounds. It could not be believed. He was like a man dreaming that he had the hangman's noose around his neck; yet the drop did not take place, it did not take place, and it would not take

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#### PROSE AT PRESENT

place. But the noose was still there. He picked up the bananas one by one, the four bananas, the whole four. No other man in the world, surely, had ever had four such fine bananas as that and not wanted to eat them? O, why had such stupid, mean scruples seized him again? It was disgusting and ungenerous to himself, it made him feel mean, it *was* mean! Rushing to his cottage door he cried: 'Here y'are!' to the playing schoolboys and flung two of the bananas into the midst of them. Then he flung another. He hesitated at the fourth, and tearing the peel from it he crammed the fruit into his own mouth, wolfig it down and gasping: 'So perish all such traitors.'

When he had completely absorbed its savour, he stared like a fool at the empty saucer. It was empty, the bananas were gone, all four irrecoverably gone.

'Damned pig!' cried Finkle.

But then he sat down and wrote all this, just as it appears.

From *The Black Dog* (1923)

## II

# KATHERINE MANSFIELD

## BANK HOLIDAY

A STOUT man with a pink face wears dingy white flannel trousers, a blue coat with a pink hand-kerchief showing, and a straw hat much too small for him, perched at the back of his head. He plays the guitar. A little chap in white canvas shoes, his face hidden under a felt hat like a broken wing, breathes into a flute; and a tall thin fellow, with bursting over-ripe button boots, draws ribbons - long, twisted, streaming ribbons - of tune out of a fiddle. They stand, unsmiling, but not serious, in the broad sunlight opposite the fruit-shop; the pink spider of a hand beats the guitar, the little squat hand, with a brass-and-turquoise ring, forces the reluctant flute, and the fiddler's arm tries to saw the fiddle in two.

A crowd collects, eating oranges and bananas, tearing off the skins, dividing, sharing. One young girl has even a basket of strawberries, but she does not eat them. 'Aren't they *dear*!' She stares at the tiny pointed fruits as if she were afraid of them. The Australian soldier laughs. 'Here, go on, there's not more than a mouthful.' But he doesn't want her to eat them, either. He likes to watch her little frightened face, and her puzzled eyes lifted to his: 'Aren't they a *price*!' He pushes out his chest and grins. Old fat women in velvet bodices - old dusty pin-cushions - lean old hags like worn umbrellas with a quivering

## PROSE AT PRESENT

bonnet on top; young women, in muslins, with hats that might have grown on hedges, and high pointed shoes; men in khaki, sailors, shabby clerks, young Jews in fine cloth suits with padded shoulders and wide trousers, 'hospital boys' in blue - the sun discovers them - the loud, bold music holds them together in one big knot for a moment. The young ones are larking, pushing each other on and off the pavement, dodging, nudging; the old ones are talking: 'So I said to 'im, if you wants the doctor to yourself, fetch 'im, says I.'

'An' by the time they was cooked there wasn't so much as you could put in the palm of me 'and !'

The only ones who are quiet are the ragged children. They stand, as close up to the musicians as they can get, their hands behind their backs, their eyes big. Occasionally a leg hops, an arm wags. A tiny stammerer, overcome, turns round twice, sits down solemn, and then gets up again.

'Ain't it lovely ?' whispers a small girl behind her hand.

And the music breaks into bright pieces, and joins together again, and again breaks, and is dissolved, and the crowd scatters, moving slowly up the hill.

At the corner of the road the stalls begin.

'Ticklers ! Tuppence a tickler ! 'Ool 'ave a tickler ? Tickle 'em up, boys.' Little soft brooms on wire handles. They are eagerly bought by the soldiers.

'Buy a golliwog ! Tuppence a golliwog !'

'Buy a jumping donkey ! All alive-oh !'

'Su-perior chewing gum. Buy something to do, boys.'

'Buy a rose. Give 'er a rose, boy. Roses, lady ?'

'Fevvers ! Fevvers !' They are hard to resist. Lovely, streaming feathers, emerald green, scarlet,

## KATHERINE MANSFIELD

bright blue, canary yellow. Even the babies wear feathers threaded through their bonnets.

And an old woman in a three-cornered paper hat cries as if it were her final parting advice, the only way of saving yourself or of bringing him to his senses: 'Buy a three-cornered 'at, my dear, an' put it on !'

It is a flying day, half sun, half wind. When the sun goes in a shadow flies over; when it comes out again it is fiery. The men and women feel it burning their backs, their breasts and their arms; they feel their bodies expanding, coming alive . . . so that they make large embracing gestures, lift up their arms, for nothing, swoop down on a girl, blurt into laughter.

Lemonade ! A whole tank of it stands on a table covered with a cloth; and lemons like blunted fishes blob in the yellow water. It looks solid, like a jelly, in the thick glasses. Why can't they drink it without spilling it ? Everybody spills it, and before the glass is handed back the last drops are thrown in a ring.

Round the ice-cream cart, with its striped awning and bright brass cover, the children cluster. Little tongues lick, lick round the cream trumpets, round the squares. The cover is lifted, the wooden spoon plunges in; one shuts one's eyes to feel it, silently scrunching.

'Let these little birds tell you your future !' She stands beside the cage, a shrivelled ageless Italian, clasping and unclasping her dark claws. Her face, a treasure of delicate carving, is tied in a green-and-gold scarf. And inside their prison the love-birds flutter towards the papers in the seed-tray.

'You have great strength of character. You will marry a red-haired man and have three children. Beware of a blonde woman. Look out ! Look out ! A motor-car driven by a fat chauffeur comes rushing down the hill. Inside there a blonde woman, pouting,

leaning forward – rushing through your life – beware ! beware !'

'Ladies and gentlemen, I am an auctioneer by profession, and if what I tell you is not the truth I am liable to have my licence taken away from me and a heavy imprisonment.' He holds the licence across his chest; the sweat pours down his face into his paper collar; his eyes look glazed. When he takes off his hat there is a deep pucker of angry flesh on his forehead. Nobody buys a watch.

Look out again ! A huge barouche comes swinging down the hill with two old, old babies inside. She holds up a lace parasol; he sucks the knob of his cane, and the fat old bodies roll together as the cradle rocks, and the steaming horse leaves a trail of manure as it ambles down the hill.

Under a tree, Professor Leonard, in cap and gown, stands beside his banner. He is here 'for one day,' from the London, Paris and Brussels Exhibition, to tell your fortune from your face. And he stands, smiling encouragement, like a clumsy dentist. When the big men, romping and swearing a moment before, hand across their sixpence, and stand before him, they are suddenly serious, dumb, timid, almost blushing as the Professor's quick hand notches the printed card. They are like little children caught playing in a forbidden garden by the owner, stepping from behind a tree.

The top of the hill is reached. How hot it is ! How fine it is ! The public-house is open, and the crowd presses in. The mother sits on the pavement edge with her baby, and the father brings her out a glass of dark, brownish stuff, and then savagely elbows his way in again. A reek of beer floats from the public-house, and a loud clatter and rattle of voices.

The wind has dropped, and the sun burns more

KATHERINE MANSFIELD

fiercely than ever. Outside the two swing-doors there is a thick mass of children like flies at the mouth of a sweet-jar.

And up, up the hill come the people, with ticklers and golliwogs, and roses and feathers. Up, up they thrust into the light and heat, shouting, laughing, squealing, as though they were being pushed by something, far below, and by the sun, far ahead of them - drawn up into the full, bright, dazzling radiance to . . . what?

From *The Garden Party* (1922)

### III

## DAVID GARNETT

## THE FLIGHT

*Jimmy Wreaks is piloting an aeroplane in an attempt at a record-breaking flight, with Lily Beanlands (owner) and Commander Wilmot Shap (acting observer) as passengers.*

THERE was no longer anything they could do. It had become boring looking at Russia. Lily and Wilmot connected up their telephones and talked for a couple of hours brightly about the French coast, discussing each little town between Marseilles and Mentone all the way along the Riviera, each with its hotels and casinos, when they had each been there, what local inhabitants they had met, the prices they had paid, the weather they had enjoyed and the awful occasions when they had been ill abroad and had to call in a French doctor.

They no longer noticed how time went and had forgotten where they were.

‘We’re in sight of the Urals. We crossed a railway about five minutes ago. I want you to spot our exact position.’

Shap became busy. ‘We’ve not done quite so well,’ he announced.

‘Asia !’ cried Lily. ‘We’re crossing into Asia !’ To their surprise the Urals looked quite a fine range of mountains. A big peak stood up to the south, and they bumped a bit. But after a quarter of an hour

Asia became very much like Europe, and after a technical conversation Shap returned to discuss the Eden Roc hotel at Antibes. Talking of hotels made them hungry, and they munched chocolate and malted milk tablets. Wreaks joined in and ate chocolate and malted milk himself. Then he drank a little brandy. He was beginning to ache in different places and suffer from pins and needles.

They flew over a lake and identified it, and slowly the hours dragged by. The sun sank low; at four-thirty, Greenwich time, it set.

'We can't be far from Akmolinsk,' said Shap.

'There are two serious dangers now,' announced Wreaks suddenly in ringing tones. 'The first is that a northerly wind should have been drifting us down to Kizyl Rai and that we should hit it. That isn't very likely. The other is that I should run into the Tarbagata or the Narym Mountains before dawn. Will you please check for wind drift by dropping a flare ?

It was obvious even to Lily that Wreaks was seriously worried, because they had not identified their position before darkness fell.

'The only thing which may save us is the moon. Only I don't know when it rises.'

As Wreaks betrayed anxiety, Shap became propitiatory and deferential and put forward consoling suggestions with the utmost tact. But Jimmy was not made easy in his mind, and kept Shap busy making observations again and again, and made him read out his calculations to him.

He was torn between the desire to push on as fast as possible (in which lay their only chance of reaching Hong-Kong) and a terror of arriving while it was still dark in the vicinity of mountains 14,000 feet or more high. As time went on it became clear that he was

becoming definitely nervous. The earth was invisible, not a light showed on it, but after five hours the sky grew paler ahead of them. Half an hour later the moon rose, revealing the peaks of a great mountain range.

'Those must be the Narym Mountains. The Altai,' said Shap.

'Well, it has come out just in time. I shan't bump into them now.'

The moon rose higher and the mountains showed black and surprisingly clear. Suddenly another range appeared closer to them on their right. 'That's splendid!' shouted Jimmy. 'Just what we ought to find.'

A bump struck them, and the machine rocked violently. Another bump. Flying became a new and difficult art, and Wreaks had to put his head inside the cockpit and watch the illuminated dash and winking little green and red lights of the turn indicator.

The mountains were becoming near and awe-inspiring, and Wreaks banked the machine and swung off on a north-easterly compass course.

'Here's the lake, Jimmy,' said Shap, delighted with the good news.

The soft moonlight gleamed over an unmistakable stretch of water. Jimmy looked out at the great mountain ranges towards which he was flying, shutting him in ahead and on his right. They were not black in the moonlight but all sorts of subdued colours, purple, violet, brown and dusky blue with dull silvery ribs of glacier shining softly in the yellow moonlight, and while the machine rocked, fighting the wind which blew off them, he licked his lips and stared.

'That's what I came for,' he whispered to himself. 'My God, I'm not too old yet. This is the lake and

we keep straight over it until we spot the Irtysh. Damn it all, I wish Donald was here, or somebody that understood. It would have just sent him crazy.'

Donald had been an observer of Jimmy's. He had been dead thirteen years.

'If there were any clouds now, or fog, we should be dead men.'

The mountains drew together and overhung them. The lake narrowed and the silvery bar of the river stretched away between the shadows of the mountains.

Jimmy grunted an assent as Shap called out: 'The Irtysh !' but his heart sang: 'The Irtysh. I've found the Black Irtysh in the dark, and here comes the dawn in a glory of fire over the snows of the Altai. At last I'm living again. It's damn fine. It's grand.'

But instead of such words he answered: 'Give me the compass course for the river. I'll fly by compass for a bit, and then come back to it so you can estimate our drift.'

The machine was needing a great deal of careful flying. The great mountain peaks drew close and their progress was slow.

'It's a head-wind !' The mountains were changing colour. On the left they were shadows of blue, hanging in screens, range behind range, like the winds and scenery running off the stage. But on the right they had been touched by the first rays of the sun and were solid, yellow, golden, green and veined with black. The sun blazed up over Eastern Turkestan, the wind backed to the north, and for a time they made more progress.

Two hours after dawn, as they passed over the Dzungarian uplands, just to the north of Bogda-ola, which rose to a height of 22,000 feet in a sheer cliff, they ran into a head-wind. It was bumpy and violent,

and for a time Wreaks had his hands full. But far worse than the bumps was the fact that the ground speed fell off noticeably.

An hour later, when they had left Bogda-ola behind them, they began to climb steadily, and Wreaks swung the machine due south. 'Here we go over the pass,' explained Shap; but Lily didn't like the pass, though, of course, the mountains were simply titanic. But the pass was too bumpy altogether until she saw the earth drop away into a deep valley. Jimmy skirted the valley and began to take the machine down. They passed over a mud town. 'There is Hami, and ahead of us we should see the Pe-shan.' The head-wind was awful.

'I'll go as low as I can and see if I can get along a bit faster,' said Jimmy. For the next hour they flew very low down, rocking and bumping violently in the wind.

The land was a broken country of desert. Rocks of all shapes and sizes, from pebbles to haystacks, were scattered thickly over a flattish plain, which became broken up into a hilly region as they approached the foothills of a mountain range, behind which, in the south, Wreaks could catch sight of the snow-capped range of the Nan-shan.

Suddenly a few drops of oil appeared on the little wind-screen in front of him, and before his mind could grasp what was happening a stream of oil was being sprayed back from under the engine cowling over his face and helmet. He ducked his head instinctively, but he could not avoid the shower of oil which covered his goggles and blinded him. Instinctively he shut the throttle and switched off the engine, and then, driven desperate by the oil, banked the machine and held its nose up with top rudder, sideslipping wildly into wind,

and pushing his goggles off as he did so, to see with his one eye. The rocks rushed at them from the tilted wing. Rocks, rocks, rocks. Nothing but rocks, and a stretch where large pebbles lay thickly in a blue and white bed at the bottom of a dry water-course, overhung by low bluffs of earth.

Wreaks no sooner saw this spot than he put the nose of the machine down and turned her quickly on the glide, and then pulling the nose sharply up, sideslipped right down on to the rocky edge of the bluff. The rocks rushed up into Lily Beanlands' face, the rush of wind tore her face as they dropped. As they almost touched the cliff's edge, Wreaks checked the slip sharply and glided down on to the bed of the stream. The passengers behind him lurched each way as he swish-tailed violently, slowing the machine until he knew that it must crash. At the last moment Wreaks put the stick back a bit more – a bit more, and deliberately stalled four feet above the earth. Bounce ! Crash ! They hit one of the bigger boulders ahead, and the tail of the machine rose in the air, the left side of the under-carriage collapsed, the wing-tip caught in the stones and splintered and tore. All was suddenly still, in a state of perfect repose. Everything had been quiet; it seemed for a very long while, ever since the engine had been switched off.

From *The Grasshoppers Come* (1931)

## IV

### ALDOUS HUXLEY

### MRS. ALDWINKLE COLLECTS A NEW DEPENDENT

*In the section from which this extract is taken Francis Chelifer, a young writer, one of the characters of the book, is telling his own story: while bathing he was run down by Mrs. Aldwinkle's boat, rescued by those with her and taken off to her residence. Her character can be gauged from the following.*

WE rolled on. The high road narrowed into the squalid street of a little town. The car crept along, hooting as it went.

'Vezza,' Mrs. Aldwinkle explained. 'Michelangelo used to come here for his marbles.'

'Indeed?' I was charmed to hear it.

Over the windows of a large shop filled with white crosses, broken columns and statues, I read the legend: 'Anglo-American Tombstone Company.' We emerged from the narrow street on to an embankment running along the edge of a river. From the opposite bank the ground rose steeply.

'There,' said Mrs. Aldwinkle on a note of triumph as we crossed the bridge, 'that's my house.' She pointed up. From the hill-top a long façade stared down through twenty windows; a tall tower pricked the sky. 'The palace was built in 1630,' she began. I even enjoyed the history lesson.

We had crossed the bridge, we were climbing by a

steep and winding road through what was almost a forest of olive trees. The abrupt grassy slope had been built up into innumerable little terraces on which the trees were planted. Here and there, in the grey luminous shadow beneath the trees, little flocks of sheep were grazing. The barefooted children who attended them came running to the side of the road to watch us passing.

'I like to think of these old princely courts,' Mrs. Aldwinkle was saying. 'Like abbeys of . . . abbeys of . . .' She shook her brandy flask impatiently. 'You know . . . in Thingumy.'

'Abbeys of Thelema,' I suggested.

'That's it,' said Mrs. Aldwinkle. 'Sort of retiring-places where people were free to live intelligently. That's what I want to make this house. I'm so delighted to have met you like this. You're exactly the sort of person I want.' She leaned forward, smiling and glittering. But even at the prospect of entering the Abbey of Thelema I did not baulk.

At this moment the car passed through a huge gateway. I caught a glimpse of a great flight of steps, set between cypresses, mounting up past a series of terraced landings to a carved doorway in the centre of the long façade. The road turned, the car swung round and the vista was closed. By an ilex avenue that wound round the flank of the hill we climbed more gradually towards the house, which we approached from the side. The road landed us finally in a large square court opposite a shorter reproduction of the great façade. At the head of a double flight of steps, curving horse-shoe fashion from the landing at its threshold, a tall pompous doorway surmounted by a coat of arms cavernously invited. The car drew up.

And about time too, as I notice on re-reading what

I have written. Few things are more profoundly boring and unprofitable than literary descriptions. For the writer, it is true, there is a certain amusement to be derived from the hunt for apt expressive words. Carried away by the excitement of the chase he dashes on, regardless of the poor readers who follow toilsomely through his stiff and clayey pages like the runners at the tail of a hunt, seeing nothing of the fun. All writers are also readers — though perhaps I should make exceptions in favour of a few of my colleagues who make a speciality of native wood-notes — and must therefore know how dreary description is. But that does not prevent them from inflicting upon others all that they themselves have suffered. Indeed I sometimes think that some authors must write as they do purely out of a desire for revenge.

Mrs. Aldwinkle's other guests had arrived and were waiting for us. I was introduced and found them all equally charming. The little niece rushed to Mrs. Aldwinkle's assistance; the young man who had rowed the *patino* rushed in his turn to the little niece's and insisted on carrying all the things of which she had relieved her aunt. The old man with the red face, who had talked about the clouds, looked on benevolently at this little scene. But another elderly gentleman with a white beard, whom I had not seen before, seemed to view it with a certain disapproval. The young lady who had talked about the whiteness of her legs and who turned out to be my distinguished colleague, Miss Mary Thriplow, was now dressed in a little green frock with a white turned-down collar, white cuffs and buttons, which made her look like a schoolgirl in a comic opera by Offenbach. The brown young man stood near her.

I got out of the car, refused all proffered assistance

and contrived, a little wamblingly, it is true, to mount the steps.

'You must be very careful for a little,' said Mrs. Aldwinkle with a maternal solicitude. 'These,' she added, waving her hand in the direction of a vista of empty saloons, the entrance to which we were just then passing, 'these are the apartments of the Princesses.'

We walked right through the house into a great quadrangle surrounded on three sides by buildings and on the fourth, towards the rising hill, by an arcade. On a pedestal in the centre of the court stood a more than life-sized marble statue, representing, my hostess informed me, the penultimate Prince of Massa Carrara, wearing a very curly full-bottomed wig, Roman kilts, buskins, and one of those handsome classical breast-plates which have the head of a Gorgon embossed in the middle of the chest and a little dimple to indicate the position of the navel in the middle of the round and polished belly. With the expression of one who is about to reveal a delightful secret and who can hardly wait until the moment of revelation comes to give vent to his pleasure, Mrs. Aldwinkle, smiling as it were below the surface of her face, led me to the foot of the statue. 'Look !' she said. It was one of those pretty peep-shows on which, for the sake of five minutes' amusement and titillation of the eye, Grand Monarchs used to spend the value of a rich province. From the central arch of the arcade a flight of marble steps climbed up to where, set against a semi-circle of cypresses, at the crest of the hill, a little round temple played gracefully at paganism, just as the buskined and corseleted statue in the court below played heroically at Plutarch.

'And now look here !' said Mrs. Aldwinkle; and taking me round to the other side of the statue, she led me towards a great door in the centre of the long range of

buildings opposite the arcade. It was open; a vaulted corridor, like a tunnel, led clean through the house. Through it I could see the blue sky and the remote horizon of the sea. We walked along it; from the further threshold I found myself looking down the flight of steps which I had seen from below, at the entrance gate. It was a stage scene, but made of solid marble and with growing trees.

'What do you think of that?' asked Mrs. Aldwinkle.

'Magnificent,' I answered, with an enthusiasm that was beginning to be tempered by a growing physical weariness.

'Such a view,' said Mrs. Aldwinkle, poking at it with the tip of her sunshade. 'The contrast between the cypresses and the olive trees . . .'

'But the view's still lovelier from the temple,' said the little niece, who was evidently very anxious to make me realize the full pricelessness of her Aunt Lilian's possessions.

Mrs. Aldwinkle turned on her. 'How utterly thoughtless you are!' she said severely. 'Do try to remember that poor Mr. Chelifer is still suffering from the effects of his accident. And you expect him to go climbing up to the temple!'

The little niece blushed and drooped beneath the reproach. We sat down.

'How are you feeling now?' asked Mrs. Aldwinkle, remembering once more to be solicitous. . . . 'Too appalling to think,' she added, 'how nearly . . . And I've always so enormously admired your work.'

'So have I,' declared my colleague in the green frock. 'Most awfully. Still, I confess, I find some of your things a little, how shall I say, a little alembicated. I like my poetry to be rather straightforward.'

'A very sophisticated desire,' said the red-faced

gentleman. 'Really simple, primitive people like their poetry to be as complicated, conventional, artificial and remote from the language of everyday affairs as possible. We reproach the eighteenth century with its artificiality. But the fact is that *Beowulf* is couched in a diction fifty times more complicated and unnatural than that of the *Essay on Man*. And when you compare the Icelandic Sagas with Dr. Johnson, you find that it's the Doctor who lisps and prattles. Only the most complicated people, living in the midst of the most artificial surroundings, desire their poetry to be simple and straightforward.'

I shut my eyes and allowed the waves of conversation to roll over me. And what a classy conversation ! Prince Papadiamantopoulos could hardly have kept the ball rolling on a higher level. Fatigue was sobering me.

Fatigue, the body's weariness – some industrious little scientific emmet ought to catalogue and measure all its various effects. All – for it isn't enough to show that when wage-slaves have worked too long they tend to fall into the machines and get pulped. The fact is interesting, no doubt; but there are other facts of no less significance. There is the fact, for example, that slight fatigue increases our capacity for sentiment. Those compromising love letters are always written in the small hours; it is at night, not when we are fresh and reposed, that we talk about ideal love and indulge our griefs. Under the influence of slight fatigue we feel more ready than at other times to discuss the problems of the universe, to make confidences, to dogmatize about the nature of God and to draw up plans for the future. We are also inclined to be more languidly voluptuous. When, however, the fatigue is increased beyond a certain point, we cease entirely to be

sentimental, voluptuous, metaphysical or confiding. We cease to be aware of anything but the decrepitude of our being. We take no further interest in other people or the outside world – no further interest unless they will not leave us in peace, when we come to hate them with a deep but ineffectual loathing, mingled with disgust.

With me, fatigue had almost suddenly passed the critical point. My convalescent's delight in the world evaporated. My fellow beings no longer seemed to me beautiful, strange and amiable. Mrs. Aldwinkle's attempts to bring me into the conversation exasperated me; when I looked at her, I thought her a monster. I realized, too late (which made the realization the more vexatious), what I had let myself in for when I accepted Mrs. Aldwinkle's invitation. Fantastic surroundings, art, classy chats about the cosmos, the intelligentsia, love. . . . It was too much, even on a holiday.

I shut my eyes. Sometimes, when Mrs. Aldwinkle interpellated me, I said yes or no, without much regard to the sense of her remark. Discussion raged around me. From the alembication of my poetry they had gone on to art in general. Crikey, I said to myself, crikey. . . . I did my best to close the ears of my mind; and for some little time I did, indeed, contrive to understand nothing of what was said. I thought of Miss Carruthers, of Fluffy and Mr. Brimstone, of Gog's Court and Mr. Bosk.

Mrs. Aldwinkle's voice, raised by irritation to a peculiar loudness, made itself audible to my muffled mind. 'How often have I told you, Cardan,' it said, 'that you understand nothing of modern art?'

'At least a thousand times,' Mr. Cardan replied cheerfully. 'But bless your heart,' he added (and I

opened my eyes in time to see his benevolent smile), 'I never mind at all.'

The smile was evidently too much for Mrs. Aldwinkle's patience. With the gesture of a queen who implies that the audience is at an end she rose from her seat. 'Just time,' she said, looking at her watch, 'there's just time. I really must give Mr. Chelifer some idea of the inside of the palace before lunch. You'd like to come?' She smiled at me like a siren.

Too polite to remind her of her recent outburst against the little niece, I declared myself delighted by the idea. Wamblingly I followed her into the house. Behind me I heard the young rorer exclaiming on a note of mingled astonishment and indignation: 'But a moment ago she was saying that Mr. Chelifer was too ill to . . .'

'Ah, but that was different,' said the voice of the red-faced man.

'Why was it different?'

'Because, my young friend, the other fellow is in all cases the rule; but *I* am invariably the exception. Shall we follow?'

Mrs. Aldwinkle made me look at painted ceilings till I almost fell down from giddiness. She dragged me through room after baroque room; then drove me up dark stairs into the Middle Ages. By the time we were back in the *trecento* I was so much exhausted that I could hardly stand. My knees trembled, I felt sick.

'This is the old armoury,' said Mrs. Aldwinkle with mounting enthusiasm. 'And there are the stairs leading up to the tower.' She pointed to a low archway, through which, in a dusty twilight, the bottom of a steep stair could be seen corkscrewing up to unknown heights. 'There are two hundred and thirty-two steps,' she added.

At this moment the gong for luncheon rumbled remotely from the other end of the huge empty house.

'Thank God !' said the red-faced man devoutly.

But our hostess, it was evident, had no feeling for punctuality. 'What a bore !' she exclaimed. 'But never mind. We can make time. I wanted just to run up the tower before lunch. There's such a wonderful bird's-eye . . .' She looked inquiringly round. 'What do you think, all of you ? Shouldn't we just dash up ? It won't take a minute.' She repeated the siren smile. 'Do let's. Do !' And without waiting for the result of her plebiscite she walked rapidly towards the stairs.

I followed her. But before I had taken five steps, the floor, the walls of the room seemed to fade into the distance. There was a roaring in my ears. It grew suddenly dark. I felt myself falling. For the second time since breakfast I lost consciousness.

When I came to, I was lying on the floor, with my head on Mrs. Aldwinkle's knees; and she was dabbing my forehead with a wet sponge. The first objects of which I was aware were her bright blue eyes hanging over me, very close, very bright and alarming. 'Poor fellow,' she was saying, 'poor fellow.' Then, looking up, she shouted angrily to the owners of the various legs and skirts which I distinguished mistily to right and left of me: 'Stand back, you must stand back ! Do you want to suffocate the poor fellow ?'

From *Those Barren Leaves* (1925)

## V

JAMES STEPHENS

## THE DEATH OF A PHILOSOPHER

*After this the children and the remaining philosopher and others have remarkable adventures in this young, brilliant world in which leprechauns and pagan deities rub shoulders with policemen and animals make human speech and mundane institutions are set at nought.*

WHEN the children were ten years of age one of the Philosophers died. He called the household together and announced that the time had come when he must bid them all good-bye, and that his intention was to die as quickly as might be. It was, he continued, an unfortunate thing that his health was at the moment more robust than it had been for a long time, but that, of course, was no obstacle to his resolution, for death did not depend upon ill health but upon a multitude of other factors with the details whereof he would not trouble them.

His wife, the Grey Woman of Dun Gortin, applauded this resolution and added as an amendment that it was high time he did something, that the life he had been leading was an arid and unprofitable one, that he had stolen her fourteen hundred maledictions for which he had no use and presented her with a child for which she had none, and that, all things concerned, the sooner he did die and stop talking the sooner everybody concerned would be made happy.

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The other Philosopher replied mildly as he lit his pipe: 'Brother, the greatest of all virtues is curiosity, and the end of all desire is wisdom; tell us, therefore, by what steps you have arrived at this commendable resolution.'

To this the philosopher replied:

'I have attained to all the wisdom which I am fitted to bear. In the space of one week no new truth has come to me. All that I have read lately I knew before; all that I have thought has been but a recapitulation of old and wearisome ideas. There is no longer an horizon before my eyes. Space has narrowed to the petty dimensions of my thumb. Time is the tick of a clock. Good and evil are two peas in the one pod. My wife's face is the same for ever. I want to play with the children, and yet I do not want to. Your conversation with me, brother, is like the droning of a bee in a dark cell. The pine trees take root and grow and die. – It's all bosh. Good-bye.'

His friend replied:

'Brother, these are weighty reflections, and I do clearly perceive that the time has come for you to stop. I might observe, not in order to combat your views, but merely to continue an interesting conversation, that there are still some knowledges which you have not assimilated – you do not yet know how to play the tambourine, nor how to be nice to your wife, nor how to get up first in the morning and cook the breakfast. Have you learned how to smoke strong tobacco as I do? or can you dance in the moonlight with a woman of the Shee? To understand the theory which underlies all things is not sufficient. Theory is but the preparation for practice. It has occurred to me, brother, that wisdom may not be the end of everything. Goodness and kindness are, perhaps, beyond

wisdom. Is it not possible that the ultimate end is gaiety and music and a dance of joy? Wisdom is the oldest of all things. Wisdom is all head and no heart. Behold, brother, you are being crushed under the weight of your head. You are dying of old age while you are yet a child.'

'Brother,' replied the other Philosopher, 'your voice is like the droning of a bee in a dark cell. If in my latter days I am reduced to playing on the tambourine and running after a hag in the moonlight, and cooking your breakfast in the grey morning, then it is indeed time that I should die. Good-bye, brother.'

So saying, the Philosopher arose and removed all the furniture to the sides of the room so that there was a clear space left in the centre. He then took off his boots and his coat, and standing on his toes he commenced to gyrate with extraordinary rapidity. In a few moments his movements became steady and swift, and a sound came from him like the humming of a swift saw; this sound grew deeper and deeper, and at last continuous, so that the room was filled with a thrilling noise. In a quarter of an hour the movement began to noticeably slacken. In another three minutes it was quite slow. In two more minutes he grew visible again as a body, and then he wobbled to and fro, and at last dropped in a heap on the floor. He was quite dead, and on his face was an expression of serene beatitude.

'God be with you, brother,' said the remaining Philosopher, and he lit his pipe, focused his vision on the extreme tip of his nose, and began to meditate profoundly on the aphorism whether the good is the all or the all is the good. In another moment he would have become oblivious of the room, the company, and the

corpse, but the Grey Woman of Dun Gortin shattered his meditation by a demand for advice as to what should next be done. The Philosopher, with an effort, detached his eyes from his nose and his mind from his maxim.

‘Chaos,’ said he, ‘is the first condition. Order is the first law. Continuity is the first reflection. Quietude is the first happiness. Our brother is dead – bury him.’ So saying, he returned his eyes to his nose, and his mind to his maxim, and lapsed to a profound reflection wherein nothing sat perched on insubstantiality, and the Spirit of Artifice goggled at the puzzle.

The Grey Woman of Dun Gortin took a pinch of snuff from her box and raised the keen over her husband:

‘You were my husband and you are dead.

It is wisdom that has killed you.

If you had listened to my wisdom instead of to your own you would still be a trouble to me and I would still be happy.

Women are stronger than men – they do not die of wisdom.

They are better than men because they do not seek wisdom.

They are wiser than men because they know less and understand more.

Wise men are thieves – they steal wisdom from the neighbours.

I had fourteen hundred maledictions, my little store, and by a trick you stole them and left me empty.

You stole my wisdom and it has broken your neck.

I lost my knowledge and I am yet alive raising

the keen over your body, but it was too heavy for you, my little knowledge.

You will never go out into the pine wood in the morning, or wander abroad on a night of stars. You will not sit in the chimney-corner on the hard nights, or go to bed, or rise again, or do anything at all from this day out.

Who will gather pine cones now when the fire is going down, or call my name in the empty house, or be angry when the kettle is not boiling ?

Now I am desolate indeed. I have no knowledge, I have no husband, I have no more to say.'

'If I had anything better you should have it,' said she politely to the Thin Woman of Inis Magrath.

'Thank you,' said the Thin Woman, 'it was very nice. Shall I begin now ? My husband is meditating and we may be able to annoy him.'

'Don't trouble yourself,' replied the other, 'I am past enjoyment and am, moreover, a respectable woman.'

'That is no more than the truth, indeed.'

'I have always done the right thing at the right time.'

'I'd be the last body in the world to deny that,' was the warm response.

'Very well then,' said the Grey Woman, and she commenced to take off her boots. She stood in the centre of the room and balanced herself on her toe.

'You are a decent, respectable lady,' said the Thin Woman of Inis Magrath, and then the Grey Woman began to gyrate rapidly and more rapidly until she was a very fervour of motion, and in three-quarters of an hour (for she was very tough) she began to slacken, grew visible, wobbled, and fell beside her dead hus-

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band, and on her face was a beatitude almost surpassing his.

The Thin Woman of Inis Magrath smacked the children and put them to bed, next she buried the two bodies under the hearth-stone, and then, with some trouble, detached her husband from his meditations. When he became capable of ordinary occurrences she detailed all that had happened, and said that he alone was to blame for the sad bereavement. He replied:

‘The toxin generates the anti-toxin. The end lies concealed in the beginning. All bodies grow around a skeleton. Life is a petticoat about death. I will not go to bed.’

From *The Crock of Gold* (1912)

## VI

E. M. FORSTER

### THE OTHER SIDE OF THE HEDGE

MY pedometer told me that I was twenty-five; and, though it is a shocking thing to stop walking, I was so tired that I sat down on a milestone to rest. People outstripped me, jeering as they did so, but I was too apathetic to feel resentful, and even when Miss Eliza Dimbleby, the great educationist, swept past, exhorting me to persevere, I only smiled and raised my hat.

At first I thought I was going to be like my brother, whom I had had to leave by the roadside a year or two round the corner. He had wasted his breath on singing, and his strength on helping others. But I had travelled more wisely, and now it was only the monotony of the highway that oppressed me – dust under foot and brown crackling hedges on either side, ever since I could remember.

And I had already dropped several things – indeed, the road behind was strewn with the things we all had dropped; and the white dust was settling down on them, so that already they looked no better than stones. My muscles were so weary that I could not even bear the weight of those things I still carried. I slid off the milestone into the road, and lay there prostrate, with my face to the great parched hedge, praying that I might give up.

A little puff of air revived me. It seemed to come

from the hedge; and, when I opened my eyes, there was a glint of light through the tangle of boughs and dead leaves. The hedge could not be as thick as usual. In my weak, morbid state, I longed to force my way in, and see what was on the other side. No one was in sight, or I should not have dared to try. For we of the road do not admit in conversation that there is another side at all.

I yielded to the temptation, saying to myself that I would come back in a minute. The thorns scratched my face, and I had to use my arms as a shield, dependent on my feet alone to push me forward. Halfway through I would have gone back, for in the passage all the things I was carrying were scraped off me, and my clothes were torn. But I was so wedged that return was impossible, and I had to wriggle blindly forward, expecting every moment that my strength would fail me, and that I should perish in the under-growth.

Suddenly cold water closed round my head, and I seemed sinking down for ever. I had fallen out of the hedge into a deep pool. I rose to the surface at last, crying for help, and I heard someone on the opposite bank laugh and say: 'Another!' And then I was twitched out and laid panting on the dry ground.

Even when the water was out of my eyes, I was still dazed, for I had never been in so large a space, nor seen such grass and sunshine. The blue sky was no longer a strip, and beneath it the earth had risen grandly into hills - clean, bare buttresses, with beech trees in their folds, and meadows and clear pools at their feet. But the hills were not high, and there was in the landscape a sense of human occupation - so that one might have called it a park, or garden, if

the words did not imply a certain triviality and constraint.

As soon as I got my breath, I turned to my rescuer and said:

‘Where does this place lead to?’

‘Nowhere, thank the Lord!’ said he, and laughed. He was man of fifty or sixty – just the kind of age we mistrust on the road – but there was no anxiety in his manner, and his voice was that of a boy of eighteen.

‘But it must lead somewhere!’ I cried, too much surprised at his answer to thank him for saving my life.

‘He wants to know where it leads!’ he shouted to some men on the hill side, and they laughed back, and waved their caps.

I noticed then that the pool into which I had fallen was really a moat which bent round to the left and to the right, and that the hedge followed it continually. The hedge was green on this side – its roots showed through the clear water, and fish swam about in them – and it was wreathed over with dog-roses and Traveller’s Joy. But it was a barrier, and in a moment I lost all pleasure in the grass, the sky, the trees, the happy men and women, and realized that the place was but a prison, for all its beauty and extent.

We moved away from the boundary, and then followed a path almost parallel to it, across the meadows. I found it difficult walking, for I was always trying to out-distance my companion, and there was no advantage in doing this if the place led nowhere. I had never kept step with anyone since I left my brother.

I amused him by stopping suddenly and saying disconsolately, ‘This is perfectly terrible. One cannot advance: one cannot progress. Now we of the road—’

‘Yes. I know.’

‘I was going to say, we advance continually.’

‘I know.’

‘We are always learning, expanding, developing. Why, even in my short life I have seen a great deal of advance – the Transvaal War, the Fiscal Question, Christian Science, Radium. Here for example—’

I took out my pedometer, but it still marked twenty-five, not a degree more.

‘Oh, it’s stopped ! I meant to show you. It should have registered all the time I was walking with you. But it makes me only twenty-five.’

‘Many things don’t work in here,’ he said. ‘One day a man brought in a Lee-Metford, and that wouldn’t work.’

‘The laws of science are universal in their application. It must be the water in the moat that has injured the machinery. In normal conditions everything works. Science and the spirit of emulation – those are the forces that have made us what we are.’

I had to break off and acknowledge the pleasant greetings of people whom we passed. Some of them were singing, some talking, some engaged in gardening, hay-making, or other rudimentary industries. They all seemed happy; and I might have been happy too, if I could have forgotten that the place led nowhere.

I was startled by a young man who came sprinting across our path, took a little fence in fine style, and went tearing over a ploughed field till he plunged into a lake, across which he began to swim. Here was true energy, and I exclaimed: ‘A cross-country race ! Where are the others ?’

‘There are no others,’ my companion replied; and, later on, when we passed some long grass from which came the voice of a girl singing exquisitely to herself,

he said again: 'There are no others.' I was bewildered at the waste in production, and murmured to myself, 'What does it all mean ?'

He said: 'It means nothing but itself' – and he repeated the words slowly, as if I were a child.

'I understand,' I said quietly, 'but I do not agree. Every achievement is worthless unless it is a link in the chain of development. And I must not trespass on your kindness any longer. I must get back somehow to the road, and have my pedometer mended.'

'First, you must see the gates,' he replied, 'for we have gates, though we never use them.'

I yielded politely, and before long we reached the moat again, at a point where it was spanned by a bridge. Over the bridge was a big gate, as white as ivory, which was fitted into a gap in the boundary hedge. The gate opened outwards, and I exclaimed in amazement, for from it ran a road – just such a road as I had left – dusty under foot, with brown crackling hedges on either side as far as the eye could reach.

'That's my road !' I cried.

He shut the gate and said: 'But not your part of the road. It is through this gate that humanity went out countless ages ago, when it was first seized with the desire to walk.'

I denied this, observing that the part of the road I myself had left was not more than two miles off. But with the obstinacy of his years he repeated: 'It is the same road. This is the beginning, and though it seems to run straight away from us, it doubles so often, that it is never far from our boundary and sometimes touches it.' He stooped down by the moat, and traced on its moist margin an absurd figure like a maze. As we walked back through the meadows, I tried to convince him of his mistake.

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'The road sometimes doubles, to be sure, but that is part of our discipline. Who can doubt that its general tendency is onward? To what goal we know not – it may be to some mountain where we shall touch the sky, it may be over precipices into the sea. But that it goes forward – who can doubt that? It is the thought of that that makes us strive to excel, each in his own way, and gives us an impetus which is lacking with you. Now that man who passed us – it's true that he ran well, and jumped well, and swam well; but we have men who can run better, and men who can jump better, and who can swim better. Specialization has produced results which would surprise you. Similarly, that girl——'

Here I interrupted myself to exclaim. 'Good gracious me! I could have sworn it was Miss Eliza Dimbleby over there, with her feet in the fountain!'

He believed that it was.

'Impossible! I left her on the road, and she is due to lecture this evening at Tunbridge Wells. Why, her train leaves Cannon Street in – of course my watch has stopped like everything else. She is the last person to be here.'

'People always are astonished at meeting each other. All kinds come through the hedge, and come at all times – when they are drawing ahead in the race, when they are lagging behind, when they are left for dead. I often stand near the boundary listening to the sounds of the road – you know what they are – and wonder if anyone will turn aside. It is my great happiness to help someone out of the moat, as I helped you. For our country fills up slowly, though it was meant for all mankind.'

'Mankind have other aims,' I said gently, for I thought him well-meaning; 'and I must join them.'

I bade him good evening, for the sun was declining, and I wished to be on the road by nightfall. To my alarm, he caught hold of me, crying: 'You are not to go yet!' I tried to shake him off, for we had no interests in common, and his civility was becoming irksome to me. But for all my struggles the tiresome old man would not let go; and, as wrestling is not my speciality, I was obliged to follow him.

It was true that I could have never found alone the place where I came in, and I hoped that, when I had seen the other sights about which he was worrying, he would take me back to it. But I was determined not to sleep in the country, for I mistrusted it, and the people too, for all their friendliness. Hungry though I was, I would not join them in their evening meals of milk and fruit, and, when they gave me flowers, I flung them away as soon as I could do so unobserved. Already they were lying down for the night like cattle – some out on the bare hillside, others in groups under the beeches. In the light of an orange sunset I hurried on with my unwelcome guide, dead tired, faint for want of food, but murmuring indomitably: 'Give me life, with its struggles and victories, with its failures and hatreds, with its deep moral meaning and its unknown goal!'

At last we came to a place where the encircling moat was spanned by another bridge, and where another gate interrupted the line of the boundary hedge. It was different from the first gate; for it was half transparent like horn, and opened inwards. But through it, in the waning light, I saw again just such a road as I had left – monotonous, dusty, with brown crackling hedges on either side, as far as the eye could reach.

I was strangely disquieted at the sight, which seemed

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to deprive me of all self-control. A man was passing us, returning for the night to the hills, with a scythe over his shoulder and a can of some liquid in his hand. I forgot the destiny of our race. I forgot the road that lay before my eyes, and I sprang at him, wrenched the can out of his hand, and began to drink.

It was nothing stronger than beer, but in my exhausted state it overcame me in a moment. As in a dream, I saw the old man shut the gate, and heard him say: 'This is where your road ends, and through this gate humanity – all that is left of it – will come in to us.'

Though my senses were sinking into oblivion, they seemed to expand ere they reached it. They perceived the magic song of nightingales, and the odour of invisible hay, and stars piercing the fading sky. The man whose beer I had stolen lowered me down gently to sleep off its effects, and, as he did so, I saw that he was my brother.

From *The Celestial Omnibus* (1911)

VII  
GEORGE MOORE

KEBREN'S DILEMMA

*Kebren, a young Athenian rhapsodist of the fifth century B.C. is summoned in a dream to Aulis. There he meets Biote. He is torn between his love for her and his ambition for his career.*

SO thought the young man, certain that he had got at the truth of the story at last, it never occurring to him that Biote had guessed the cause of his silence and his brooding in Eubœa, and that it seemed to her natural he should hesitate between her and his career as a rhapsodist. She did not put it to herself in this way, but she felt he might ask for a year or two in which to give lectures, saying that when they were over he would return to her. And she listened to his readings with this thought always in her mind, till one afternoon whilst walking on the seashore, she said she had found a poplar among some high rocks down the coast which reminded her of one mentioned in the Iliad. The poplar by the mere, he answered, like Simœisius before Ajax struck him in the breast by the right nipple as he was coming on among the foremost fighters. And whilst watching the tide breaking on the rocks Kebren's words tripped up Biote's; there was rivalry as to which should remind the other that as is the race of leaves, even so is the race of men; and the emotion of the moment being more than they could bear, a silence fell and they watched the tide racing into waves, each wave

seeming to them to represent a generation. The wave rises and then sinks back into the sea, Kebren said, and we are not even waves, but bubbles on the waves. But the bubble delights in its life on the wave and in the life of its brother bubble, Biote replied, and they walked by the curving shore through rocks and across beaches of white sand till they came to three poplars showing against a grey sky. Presaging rain, Kebren said, and he watched the poplars swaying sorrowful. I have never seen poplars so thin and tall, Biote, and now that the sky is grey and a breeze is about they sway like three sisters complaining of their fate. The gesture of the middle poplar leaves no doubt of their sadness, sadness rather than grief and they lament . . . For what do they lament, Kebren? I cannot tell thee, Biote. Perhaps, said Biote, because having grown so thin and tall there is nothing more for them to do. Her answer pleased him, and guessing that he was pleased with her she continued to talk about trees, saying that all were sad except flowering trees: And flowering trees are happy only whilst in flower.

How sweetly the birds are singing, Kebren, come over from Africa, resting here before they start on their journey northward. Shall we go into the wood to listen to their prattle, more explicit than the poplars'? He did not answer, and they walked to the end of a piece of embaying land, to stand admiring the great blue wave that came up the strait, breaking almost at their feet in foam. Will she speak or I before the next wave? he asked himself, and whilst another down the strait gathered strength she said: Kebren, is it not strange that we should wander by this shore talking of Homer, forgetful of ourselves? Once on a time it seemed as if we had met for a purpose, and now there is neither purpose nor aim in life, none in mine at least. Biote,

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I shall return in a year, and on this selfsame shore—  
In a year men's hearts change, Kebren; four times every  
year the world changes, and the human heart is part of  
the world. Which means, Biote, that when I return I  
shall find that another hath taken my place in thine  
affection? We change for better or for worse, she  
answered; if thou returnest it will be to a new Biote,  
and if I give my hand to thee then I shall give it to a  
stranger. Hast thou so little faith in thyself? he asked.  
In Aulis— Even in Aulis there is change, Kebren,  
and sitting before my tapestry I shall see thee in my  
thoughts crowned with laurel in the midst of insinuat-  
ing women whom the laurel entices. Thinkest that  
I can bear with this for a year? And why should I  
bear with it? Better that we should stand free of each  
other, he answered. O man of infirm purpose, still  
dreaming between two adventures, go to thy work,  
which is thyself, and take thy chance of me when the  
work is done. In Cnidus and elsewhere, Biote, if I  
win a laurel wreath I shall dread the suitors about thy  
loom— Afraid that I shall not have the courage to  
unravel the tapestry? Yes, Biote; I am afraid to lose  
thee. And afraid to retain me, she replied. And they  
returned towards Aulis with the mournful gait of those  
who feel their lives to be broken.

The little town of wharves and warehouses came into  
view, and they turned down the laneway, Biote a little  
more hopeful than Kebren. It would break her heart  
to lose him, she knew that, but she knew too that he  
would give way. And it was in the midst of their  
trouble that Otanes told them he had thought to find  
them on the wharf. He spoke to them of a ship about  
to sail for Ionia laden with images of the Gods, some  
made of gold and marble and others of ivory and gold.  
The captain was averse from taking on board certain

philosophers, fearing their conversation would be displeasing to the Gods, but I said to him: Thou'rt wrong to prevent philosophers going aboard thy ship, in whose company the Gods themselves delight, and this at a time when thou art trying to turn the Gods to the most advantage. And Otanes continued for some time longer, telling how he had made it plain to the captain that he himself was guilty of impiety in carrying the statues from port to port, till the silence of the twain roused him out of the pleasure he took in hearing his own words. He stopped, and looking from one to the other he said: As neither hath anything to say for or against my discourse with the captain, it will be well for us to take refuge in Homer; and to awaken Kebren's interest in the poet he added as they crossed the court-yard: The thundering tread of swift-footed horses strikes on my ear ! Why that line more than another ? Kebren asked himself, and full of misgivings he began to read in a languid, monotonous voice that satisfied Biote he was suffering on her account. All the same, when the reading was over she could not keep back the words: If Kebren brings the same animated understanding to his readings abroad as he does here, his brow will not be able to bear the weight of the laurel leaves the Cnadians will pile upon it. Otanes answered her that the book Kebren had just finished reading was an exact account of how each hero was slain at Troy: Pages of personal history that—— Even Homer is dull sometimes, father. Girl, thou babblest like a child, even as thoughtlessly, and thy conduct in leaving thy seat before our guest hath finished reading is distasteful to me. To me too, father, she replied, returning to her seat. Then I understand thee not at all, Biote; I did not suspect a sneer in thy praise of Kebren's reading.

In the hope of retrieving himself somewhat in her

eyes Kebren asked if he might read part of the next book. Otanes was willing to prolong the reading, and as Biote did not shrug her shoulders disdainfully he began again. But she heard very little of what he read, and to keep her secret from her father she sat the next evening like one afraid to lose a syllable of the hexameters, asking that a passage should be read over again, vexed when Otanes inquired why she desired a second reading of it. On another occasion she left the court-yard abruptly, saying: I am weary of the *Iliad* ! and the two men sat talking of the moods to which women are liable, Kebren murmuring that these interruptions made the reading so difficult that he dreaded the approach of evening. Answering him, Otanes said it was true that the *Iliad* seemed to please her no longer, and his advice was that Kebren should refrain from reading the last books. She is very various, said Kebren. Like her mother, Otanes replied. But next day another Biote, more attentive, begged that Kebren should read Priam's visit to Achilles, and she sat, taking pleasure in every harmonious accent of the hexameters, saying when the reading was over: A ship looses to-morrow for Troy; why should we not be passengers in her, father ? Leaving my business to look after itself, Biote ? And Kebren ? Kebren will not miss us, she replied, without glancing in his direction; he will spend the last few days reading the books in search of his goddess. For us to find him gone, daughter, when we return from Troy, or haply to return in time to see him step on board a ship bound for Cnidus. Art sure then that he is leaving us ? Sure indeed, she answered; he goes at my bidding. Thy words, Biote, leave me thinking that thy heart hath turned against him; I would hear his story, but since thou has ordered his departure for good reasons or bad, it is for thee to speak first. Kebren

asks for the right to return hither after wandering for a year, and doubtless he will gain applause for his reading. Women follow the laurel— Jealousy, Biote ! Otanes interjected reprovingly. I love thy daughter but I love my life, too, and conceive it to be a wanderer's. In youth, Otanes replied, we know not in what direction our true instincts lead us. We are at hazard. Remain with us for a year, Kebren, and if a year in Aulis should prove thee another Odysseus thou wilt re-engage in thy long pursuit of Helen. And looking from his daughter's face to his future son-in-law's, Otanes waited for one of them to speak. Thou art a kind and wise and foreseeing father, Biote cried at last, and if Kebren be willing so am I. A betrothal of a year will do no harm to either, she continued, and mayhap will bring forth much knowledge of each other that will help us through future years when the bliss is over. Thou lookest ahead, Biote, said Kebren. Thinkest that I shall return to Helen ? Thou wert willing to leave me for her, Kebren— A truce to your bickerings ! cried Otanes. To the woods, where nightingales are singing ! Out under the moon, the friend and companion of the betrothed ! And with a sense of Otanes's wisdom in their hearts they left him.

To some gift for prediction I may lay claim ! And the thoughts of Otanes flitting to the *Red Flamingo*, he remembered that his father on his deathbed had warned him not to put his trust in ships. His friends, too, had warned him that the *Red Flamingo* would sink in the first storm, but he had not listened to father or to friends but had sent her into dry-dock to be repaired, and for years afterwards she had voyaged successfully in the Euxine. Biote had heard the story of the *Red Flamingo* and judged him by it; and he had often answered her: I have never regretted any act that came

from within. All the same, fortune had come to him year after year, the safe unloading of one rich cargo making good the loss of another by shipwreck, so that he had never been able to rid himself of the belief that he was not as other men are, purblind, seeing but dimly. He cast into the other scale the death of his wife, a great misfortune truly, but she had left him Biote, who would marry and give him grandchildren. If she did not marry all the wealth he had accumulated would fall into other hands; he'd be forgotten in Aulis. The need of grandchildren had often stopped him on the wharf; he would stand admiring the ships and the ships' crews, and on a sudden turn away sadly with the phrase between his teeth: Who will take charge of all this trade when I am gone? And often on returning from the wharf he would walk about his house, filled with Theano's tapestries and sculpture in marble and ivory brought from over seas. His house had contributed to his sadness. Who will live in it in the days to come if Biote does not marry? he had said to himself. A beautiful girl and a charming girl, yet her eyes do not turn to any man; true, there are few in Aulis that are worthy of her. But the cause of his despondency was now over; Biote would marry, and her wedding would be a memorable event in Aulis. And his thoughts passing out of the present into the distant past, when Aulis was no more than a little fishing village raised by his industry and foresight to a great merchant port, he sat in a sort of happy stupor, awakening at last to ask himself of what he had been thinking all this long while, for it was a long while since he had bidden his daughter and his future son-in-law away to the woods.

From *Aphrodite in Aulis* (1931)

## VIII

CHARLES MORGAN

### LEWIS AND NARWITZ MEET

*Lewis Alison, taken prisoner in the late War, welcomes his captivity as an opportunity for cultivating the contemplative life: while on parole in Holland he meets Julie, who was once his pupil and is now married to von Narwitz, a German nobleman who has been badly injured in the War. Lewis and Julie fall in love with each other. . . .*

YOU must be Mr. Alison. I have long hoped to see you.'

'Yes, I am Alison.'

'I am Narwitz. . . . You will forgive my not rising to welcome you? It is hard for me to move quickly when I have been long in one position.'

Lewis said in a low voice that he must not attempt to move; then was silent, even this formal courtesy having required of him an effort of will; but Narwitz seemed unaware of constraint between them.

'That chair is Julie's,' he said quietly. 'Take it for a little while. Soon she will be coming out to read Turgenieff to me.' And he added, when Lewis had taken the chair: 'She says that you have been working on Dirk van Leyden's papers. Tell me of them. I have always been curious about that old man.'

Though Lewis told him of Dirk's papers, and they fell into argument on subjects arising from them, his impression of Narwitz was at first less of his words than of his eyes and of the extreme frailty of the face

in which they were set. It seemed that this was not a man met for the first time, but another long known to him whom he ought to recognize but could not, and, struggling for a key to this mysterious familiarity, he gazed at his companion with deepening intensity until at last Narwitz broke their discussion to say: 'What is the question you are trying to answer in my face?' and Lewis apologized for having stared.

'No, no,' Narwitz answered. 'You were looking at me in a way one does not resent - not in empty curiosity but as if the answer to your question, whatever it is, would be of some genuine value to yourself.'

'The question? I suppose I was asking myself: Where on earth have I met that man before?' Lewis said. 'Of course we have never met; I know that. But I feel that the few minutes we have spent together are - are like a little island sticking up out of the water. You see an island floating on the surface and you say, There's an island, as if that were all. Then you remember that it's only a fragment, the topmost peak exposed by chance, of a vast sea-mountain, perhaps of a range of mountains rooted in the ocean depths.'

'Or rooted in yourself,' Narwitz interrupted, throwing out a keenly interrogative glance. 'Perhaps what makes me seem deeply familiar to you is that we have one profound interest in common? Isn't it so?'

An interest in common? For a moment, thinking of Julie, Lewis recoiled before the possibility of her husband's suspicion, but Narwitz's expression was gentle and calm.

'I mean,' he added, 'our desire so to control our lives that we are invulnerable within the world. That is, certainly, a universal desire, but you and I are conscious of it, and that's rare; it's a link between us. Contemplation is one of the words that unite men in

Turgenieff's sense,' he added, after pausing to pick up from a small table at his side the book that Julie was to read to him when she came. 'Do you know this story?' He raised it in the sunlight.

'Yes, I know it well.'

'In the opening – and there isn't a lovelier opening to any story; it's the character of Insarov, when he comes, that prevents it from being a masterpiece – in the opening, when the two young men, the philosopher and the artist, are lying in the shade of the lime tree on the river-bank, discussing ants and beetles and beauty and women and love, do you remember how Bersenyev declares that happiness isn't one of the words that unite men? The words that unite are Art, Country, Science, Freedom – so he says; it seems a strange choice to us, over-coloured with liberal optimism. Still, Bersenyev was young. . . . Then he says that love, too, is a word that unites – not the love that Shubin has in his mind, but the love that is self-sacrifice.'

'That's a bad phrase,' Lewis interrupted.

Narwitz considered it, lifting his eyebrows and lowering them, as though he were tasting a wine. 'Yes,' he admitted, 'smudged. Nineteenth-century liberalism again; even Turgenieff couldn't escape it.' He laughed. 'No wonder Shubin answers: "That's all very well for Germans!"'

'If I remember, Shubin had French blood in him,' Lewis said, smiling.

Narwitz's eyes sparkled. 'Yes. You are right. Shubin wants love for himself. He wants to be first. Then, suddenly – and this is what I've been leading to – suddenly Turgenieff writes his autobiography, or rather his explanation of himself, his *apologia*, in a phrase of Bersenyev's – "it seems to me that to put

oneself in the second place is the whole significance of life.' " When Turgeniev wrote that, love was in the foreground of his thought; it was of love Bersenyev had been speaking; but the saying is a universal one — or so I understand it,' Narwitz added, gazing before him. Slowly he turned his eyes on Lewis and awaited his answer. But Lewis could not answer at once. He felt that he had been engaged in this dialogue before, long ago — perhaps in his own mind — and his reply, when he spoke it, seemed to have been given him by some prompter whom he was powerless to disregard.

'It seems to me that to discover what to put before oneself, in the first place, is the whole problem of life,' he said.

'It seems so to you now. So it did to me — for years. But it is not a problem that any man is under compulsion to solve.'

'An artist has his answer, I suppose,' Lewis continued, 'and a saint. But most of us have none. We snatch at any answer that comes — Freedom, Country, and now, in Russia, Class. Is there any answer that endures except Art and God ?'

'Death is the answer,' Narwitz said. 'No,' he added swiftly, 'not in the sense in which men say stupidly that "death is the answer to all things," meaning only that they are tired of thought. When we are young children, we know nothing of death. Then we become aware of it, recognize it, fear it or conquer our fear of it, seeing it always objectively as something outside ourselves, a final pit perhaps, or a pit we shall climb out of, as some believe, into another life. But there is another stage in the knowledge of death. A man who ceases to regard it as something outside himself and, so to speak, draws it into his consciousness and assimilates the idea of it is completely changed.

He is in all truth born again. He sees himself now in a second place absolutely – not relatively to something else in the first place. What occupies the first place he may, or may not, learn some day, but that is not of present importance. The arrogance, the delusion that I have found it hardest to overcome,' he said, leaning towards Lewis as though this aided his confession, 'the fatal delusion is our belief that we are entitled to first place until we have discovered in our own experience something that transcends us. So we set up idols, our country, our creed, our art, our beloved one, what you will, and pour all our spiritual possessions into the idol's lap. We call that humility or love – Turgeniev would call it self-sacrifice. Except to the gods we make out of our experience or dreams we will not kneel down. But the true saint and philosopher,' Narwitz concluded in a tone not of assertion but of longing, 'is he who can kneel without an image because he sees himself in a second place absolutely, and to kneel is an inward necessity to him. Fate cannot touch such a man – or, rather, though it rend his mind and body, it cannot affect him.'

While they talked, the breeze of the early morning returned. The still gleam of the lakes was changed into a sparkling ripple and Lewis felt the air move coolly on his forehead. Among the trees on the opposite bank, the domed roof of the pavilion was shining in the sun, shining and occulting as the shadow of branches swayed over it, and the little waterfall streamed in brilliant froth from under the darkness of the bridge. Life had never held a gayer or more delicious quietness than at this moment. Lewis found that his mind moved strongly and at ease, as though he had been given new insight into whatever subject they discussed; he had the same pleasure in

argument with Narwitz, as an artist has in a drawing which simplifies and declares itself before him, flowing with such a rhythm of inward power as he has never perceived in any work of his. Even when speaking of his history of the contemplative life, Lewis found that in Narwitz's presence he understood it more fully than in the past. 'The difficulty,' he said, 'is to make clear the distinction between the inward stillness and balance which is the genuine purpose of contemplation and the indifference to life or the fear of it which has many of the outward appearances of contemplation, but is the product of a lazy or a cowardly mind.'

'The distinction is difficult,' Narwitz replied, 'only because the genuine contemplative and the indifferent or lazy man have certain superficial actions in common, and it is hard for us to distinguish between men except in terms of their actions. Ascetic forbearance may be a genuine discipline or a form of cowardice, and calmness in joy or suffering is easily confused by an external observer with insensitiveness to them. So it happens that many suppose contemplative stillness to be a kind of death or suicide. "The man isn't alive," they say. "He has chosen to go down into the grave before his time." And of those who shut themselves away from the world and mortify themselves, the saying is in part true. But shutting away is not essential to stillness. The supreme stillness is achieved in the open. We suffer and enjoy; we fight and love, win and lose; but, in the midst of it all, are still. Is that a contradiction in terms? How can a man who delights in victory and suffers in defeat yet be still? Can you, in your history, make that paradox comprehensible?'

'I can think of a childish parallel with it that everyone will understand,' Lewis answered with a smile. 'When we play a game, we love to win and hate to

lose; we don't stand aside in cold indifference but struggle passionately with every energy of body and mind; yet the struggle is unreal; another and deeper life continues independently of the game, and survives it and is not affected by it.'

Narwitz answered with a chuckle that this was a very English metaphor. None but an Englishman would attempt to explain the contemplative ideal in terms of sport.

'Socrates wouldn't have hesitated if it had served his purpose,' Lewis retorted.

'You are right,' Narwitz said gravely, 'and you are a better scholar than I am.'

'I am not a scholar among scholars.'

'That matters not very much if your scholarship helps you to give an idea to the world and saves you from the folly of supposing that what is old is new. We are working over very old ground, you and I, searching for treasure that was currency once but has long been buried and by most men is forgotten. The world has become so poor that its ancient treasures of the spirit are necessary to it. It has formed a habit of thinking in groups, classes, masses; and civilization is breaking down under the burden of that error. It is an error because masses are contrary to nature; they are not born, they do not die, they have no immortality; the poetry of human experience does not apply to them. Birth and death are solitary; thought and growth are solitary; every final reality of a man's life is his alone, incommunicable; as soon as he ceases to be alone, he moves away from realities. And the more he is identified with others, the farther he moves from truth. Lenin is aware of this. He knows that the nearer any human association is to spiritual solitude, the more damaging it is to what he believes

to be mass-truth. Therefore the love of man for God or of man for woman is counter-revolutionary and he would destroy it. It can't be destroyed. When Lenin can merge two consciousnesses into one consciousness, when he can enable men to yield up their secrets which now they cannot communicate even to those they love, when he can break down the isolation of the human spirit, then he will succeed. Not until then. Men can share their possessions but not themselves. That is the mystery and the power of love,' he said, his voice falling again into the tone of personal confession, 'it approaches more nearly than any other human experience to the impossible sharing of self. Like every other supposed sharing, it is an unreality, but it is the supreme unreality - the last that we recognize as unreal. But it is a part of your game, Alison; we play it with heart and soul; all other gains and losses are poured into its loss or gain.' After an interval of silence, he added: 'I have not learned how to transcend it. If that too were lost, should I not, for all my lessons, be like an angry child who cannot distinguish between the unreal game that is over and the continuing reality?' And, having rested long in thought, he said, with his eyes on Lewis: 'I don't know why I ask you this. It is a question I ask of myself.'

The tone of intimacy and frankness in which these concluding words were spoken made upon Lewis an impression so deep, sudden and overpowering that he did not reply and was even unaware of any need to do so. He had from the outset recognized in Narwitz an exceptional candour and strength, but had remained, in some degree, an external observer of them, admiring but with reserve, and asking himself, without being able to discover an answer, whence arose his feeling of familiarity with this man whom he knew to be a

stranger. Now, with that abrupt and inexplicable transition with which one's thought of a woman changes from 'I like' to 'I love,' a transition which makes of her a new woman and of the world a new world, he said within him: Here is a great man, here is my master ! and, looking again at Narwitz, he added almost with terror: To betray him is to betray myself. When he tried to recall the words that had produced this effect, he could remember only the confessional simplicity with which they had been spoken, a simplicity that had seemed to lay open his own as well as the speaker's heart, and he was filled with the shame of one who receives dumbly, because he dare not respond, the affectionate confidence of a child upon whom he has secretly worked some great evil.

But Narwitz's strength was in his capacity to transcend suffering, whether it gripped him now or lay in wait for him. He was not to be pitied. As well pity the triumph of the Cross. All values of the past were changed by being seen in the proportion of his spiritual stature, and, in his presence, Lewis ceased to blame or to defend his own conduct, arguments that would have been applicable if Julie's husband had been a different man seeming now to have become irrelevant.

'That's Julie's step !' Narwitz said, unable to turn far enough in his chair to watch her approach.

At sight of Lewis she hesitated. Her eyebrows went up for an instant, and her eyes shone. Then she ran forward and, leaning over her husband's chair, placed her hands on his shoulders. She looked over his head towards Lewis and exclaimed: 'So you have met, then !' and waited.

'In a sense, we have known each other a long time,' Narwitz answered as though he had power to look into Lewis's mind.

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She would not take the chair she was offered, but curled herself on the grass, plucking little shreds of green and scattering them idly on her white dress.

'It's good to see you again,' she said to Lewis. 'You have deserted us. I didn't dare to come to you. I thought that when you were working——' The bantering untruth would not be completed, and though Lewis covered her hesitation with the first nonsense to enter his head they could not be at ease. Narwitz, whose habit was to speak his thought without ceremony, broke in upon them.

'Do you know, Julie, that he and I have not spoken a word of the war?'

'A good subject to avoid.'

'I don't think so. Neither of us deliberately avoided it. It was by chance we talked of other things. But we shall talk of it, and must, unless we are to shut away a great part of our minds from each other, like polite old ladies at a party.'

'If we talk of it,' Lewis said, 'for heaven's sake let it not it be with "tolerance." What we think, we say.'

But Julie was nervous of the subject and led them away from it. What she wanted to say to Lewis she did not know; chance and mood would decide that as they decided so much for her; but she wished to be alone with him, and to find herself now within reach of his hand but divided from him was to her an intolerable penance. It drove her, in an attempt to cloak her feelings, to conversation of a kind that she might have held among strangers. She was already in a highly nervous condition. An hour ago she had gone upstairs, rung for servants and given orders that Rupert's bed was to be moved out of his westward room into her own great bedchamber in the tower. Standing by her dressing-table she had watched the

alteration made, forcing her mind to consideration of its detail – the avoidance of draughts, the direction of light falling from the embrasures. At night, she thought, I will look after him myself; the nurse will be within call if she is needed. While the bed was being wheeled into position she went into her music-room and seated herself at her clavichord. 'Listen,' she called to the servants through the open door in the partition. 'Tell me, can you hear when I play?' 'Ja, Mevrouw.' 'Clearly?' 'O, ja, Mevrouw.' 'That is good,' and she had returned to the bedroom and had walked restlessly to and fro, refusing to allow her eyes to settle on the screen that concealed the door leading down into the library. She had been impatient of the servants' presence, of their clumsy movements and heavy breathing as they lifted the furniture. They went at last, looking over their shoulders, and left her alone, her cheeks flaming. What would come of this change, she did not know. At least Rupert should not believe that she separated herself from him.

After sitting for a little while in her window-seat, for her limbs were shaking and she needed rest, she had gone down into the garden, thinking that she would find Rupert alone and wondering whether and in what manner she should tell him of the change she had made. To see Lewis had sent a freezing thrill through her body which checked and confused her. She had been able to overcome it only by running forward and saying emptily: 'So you have met, then!'

Now, tearing the grass at Rupert's feet, she saw him fold and unfold his fingers in the sun as though he were allowing an invisible fabric to run between them, and heard him say: 'This is a day to be happy on.'

She jumped up and laughed and stretched herself and, stooping suddenly, kissed him on the lips. She

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had not before done this of her own will and knew not now why she did it, except that it seemed a part of the determination in which she had come from the tower into the garden. He caught her hand, but she could not leave it to him and drew away, laughing again to cover her withdrawal. As she did so and her eyes met Lewis's, she knew that Rupert had intercepted their glance. And had perceived its significance? It was ridiculous to believe this; he had not a key to their minds. Suddenly she was possessed by an impulse to kneel down and hide her face in the rug covering his knees and to tell him the truth. She imagined herself behaving in this way and the contact of the woollen rug with her cheek.

A clock over the stables began to strike and far away in the village a bell was ringing.

'I must go back to the cottage,' Lewis said.

She watched him go.

'Well,' she asked, 'what do you think of my Englishman?'

From *The Fountain* (1932)

## IX

### REBECCA WEST

## ARNOLD SEES HARRIET AGAIN

*Harriet Hume has lost her lover Arnold Condorex, partly through his worldly ambitions, partly through her embarrassing gift of being able to read his thoughts.*

SO he passed on, and did not see his Harriet until a December afternoon, criss-crossed with the residue of its yesterday's light snowfall, more than four years later. Heavens ! how well he felt that day ! He tingled with good health and energy and prosperity. That was why after he had had luncheon with old Lord Ketchup in Hyde Park Gate he left by foot and crossed the Kensington Road that he might walk part of his way back to Albany through the Park. Lord, he felt well ! All turned to satisfaction in him. This very walk afforded proof of how neatly his days were dovetailed in these times, and what good cabinet-making these adjustments had achieved. He would take a stroll through the Park, which would keep his figure slim; he would look in on his club, the Senile Abercorn, to which by marvellous good fortune he had been elected three years before in spite of his inconsiderable age, and take his ease where no one at his birth could have predicted he would take it, and be civil to such notable people as he chanced to see; and then he would go at leisure to his rooms in Albany and oversee the preparations his valet had made with

the pigskin (none had sprucer luggage than he had now, who came to London with a tin-trunk) for this all-important Christmas visit to Ireland; and later he would find himself, with everything he needed for both body and soul, surely the best-found passenger in the night mail for Holyhead.

A régime always as provident as this, he reflected as he trudged along, had made him whom they had early ceased to call a man of promise only because his promise had come so soon to fulfilment. Prudence and hard work, these two had set him well on the way to rise in the world to a height that all would have to note; and what was so blessed was that he had had to pay for it with no sacrifice at all. He had sacrificed none of his principles; and once or twice had taken a firm and fearless line, careless of public opinion, that had proved very popular. Nor had he been obliged to sacrifice his robust health to his assiduity. His marvellous sense of bodily well-being was proof of that. The elasticity of his own tread intoxicated him, and he was enchanted to observe that in the short space of Kensington Road he had need to promenade before he entered the Park he outstripped two or three young men who seemed to be still in their twenties. Though the air was stinging, his circulation was so well able to resist it that he could enjoy the beauties of nature as wholeheartedly as if he were walking on a June afternoon; and indeed they deserved enjoyment. 'It can all be done in one single line,' Winter was saying of the trees, 'if one is careful to keep the point of the pen on the paper, and charges it discreetly with the indian ink. And line, of course, is the thing. But it cannot be done all this way unless you choose a good solid dull sky as a background. You will be driven to the weak, water-colour methods

of my poor sister Spring if you confuse your back-ground with dots and dashes of sunshine; and if you flood it with a gross plenitude of blue as Summer does there is nothing for it but to go in for her shapeless and strong-coloured flummery of leaves. And if you let all get sodden with gold, as Autumn does, then there is nothing for it but to paint like Turner and be damned. But if you care for line, why here it is.' And there it was, on each side of the road through Hyde Park, in black traceries on dun that made the human attempts at acuity in the form of the spiked railings below seem bluntness itself; and yet further off, out of the foreground of the eye, where they marked the course of the Ladies' Mile and Rotten Row, they melted into a lacy darkness soft as soot.

Because the grass beneath them was brindled with light snow, this darkness seemed intense to the point of vehemence. Now that the earth itself had taken on the colour of old age the tree-trunks themselves, which at other times are the least spectacular forms of growth, created such a feeling of resolute increase as is given ordinarily by some prodigious show of leaf or flower or fruit. They might have been black flames thrusting upwards through the effete soil, from some subterranean power-house which was far too much in earnest to paint them with the ruddy hues that belong to fires of a more superficial kindling. The scene, full as it was of a sense of the life of earth in spite of being crowded with signs of the suspension of all opulence, suggested a plutonic energy that could work exultantly in spite of receiving none of these encouragements which man considers necessary to sweeten his toil. That impression was heightened as there thundered along the riding-track beside him a party of horsemen whose faces were contracted with pain at

the bitterness of the air, and yet were magnificent with pride at their government of their mounts and pleasure in the speed to which they had compelled them. It increased his already enormous satisfaction with the afternoon that not for more than a minute did he feel that cringing resentment which those who walk commonly feel at the sight of those who ride, since he could remind himself that now he was among the riders, and had himself often caused others to cringe. He rode remarkably well for one who had acquired the art of horsemanship far more lately than in childhood. He need have no anxiety about following the hounds in Ireland. The thought of his progress in this and other matters made him feel himself like a great horse, magnificently sound in wind and limb, thudding down its hooves on soil that Providence had seen was neither waterlogged nor broken by frost, in a gallop that nothing would stop.

He had intended to go along the Row to Hyde Park Corner, and would have done so had he not seen, whisking into the gate in the railings which admits to the more mannered elegancies of Kensington Gardens, a neat figure, which made him burst out laughing and exclaim, 'By Gad ! that is Harriet Hume !' He burst out laughing because she was so very pretty, and he did not want her. He did not want anything that he had not got. He had it all. 'I must have a word with little Harriet,' he told himself, and crossed the road, for he had nothing else to do since clubs will wait. Moreover, even seen through the blurring palisade of railings, she was a creature of such special and skimming grace that it was the height of luxury not to desire her because he was about to have as good. 'She walks fast, she is like a deer !' he said, as he passed within the gates and found that

she was already a small figure at the end of the broad elm walk that leads down to the Serpentine. Gaining on her, he continued to congratulate her and himself by perceiving her quality. 'She dresses well,' he said, 'she understands her type !' For she wore a little black hat that was three-cornered yet was not so fanciful that it offended, and he wondered no longer why she kept her elbows pinned to her side, after she had raised a muff to her face and buried first one cheek and then the other in its softness. How trimly she was speeding before him, and with what good temper ! She was cold, and she desired to be warm, but there was no sullenness about her objection to her state and her desire to change it. Simply she hastened through the air with a movement more dancing than usual and her cheek laid to a muff as amiably as if it were a lover. Oh, she was a good wench, this little Harriet !

Just then a breach in the trees showed him a vista extending to the very brim of the Serpentine, where certain people standing at the water's edge, because of the flatness of the shore at this particular point, had the appearance of waiting on a quay for a boat; and a certain disposition of the trees and bushes on the opposite bank, grouped beneath a perspective of spires and towers that seemed inside the Park though they were in fact far beyond its boundaries, deceived topography and conjured up an illusion of a fantastic island to which the expected boat would ferry them. 'Is this where we embark for Cythera ?' his mind asked him with odd inconsequence and emphasis; and he had an even odder notion that if that were not to be so it was only because he and Harriet had already made their embarkations, and that other selves of theirs than could be seen were even now drifting down

a dark stream, their faces pale in a colder and a later hour than this that chilled them now.

But his mind shook itself like a dog, and he leaped back to his gratifying game of approving that of which he had no need. 'I will not speak to her for a while,' he said exultantly, 'I will walk just behind her,' for that gave him a pleasing sense of contrast to the days when, had he seen her walking in front of him, he would have had to run forward even under horses' heads and cars' bonnets, and slip his arm through hers, that at the first possible moment he might have her lovely face tilted to him and hear her Oh's and Ah's. But he could not long remain in that mood of exultation, for there were a thousand incidents in her promenade which competed to distract him. The first thing that happened was that an ill-favoured Irish wolf-hound, putting his fore-paws on a pool of ice, found them sliding away from him and howled in consternation until Harriet tripped forward and jerked him to trustworthy ground by the collar. She bowed her head to whisper to his pale and pompous eyes in his own language that not for one instant had he lost his dignity; and he snuffled in her hand to compliment her on her perfect accent. Then she bounded on, turning her little head right and left to enjoy the icy flavour of the day. The path was running beside the lake now, and all was hard-chiselled. The weakest little woman among the ducks, the most down-trodden wife of them all, who hardly dared call her quack her own, could not indulge her natural disposition to swim without making a V adamantine as an irrevocable decision on the nearly frozen lake. There was no wind-crisped water here, only ribbed glass.

This world clear-cut as her own ankles, cool as her own hands, was naturally pleasant to her. For quite

a time she dallied by a clump of reeds which a matrimonial scuttering of ducks had deluged with spray which had frozen on the very instant, and had now the aspect of a French prism candlestick. 'She is like a child,' he thought tenderly, 'things that glitter are dear to her.' But she was tempted from her reeds by another beauty peculiar to this season, at which her nostrils dilated with not less delight. So few people were abroad this bitter day that there were no parties breaking the landscape by following convenient and arbitrary paths, and there were no performances of chase and counter chase by the industrious ballet of London dogs. Hence the eye could without disturbance apprehend under the boracic sprinkling of light snow the gentle contours that God had given to the place, and the noble avenues which Capability Brown had seen in his fancy when he planted his saplings. The great Metropolis was annulled. The park-keeper's delicious lodge, with its proportions squat as a Royal bonnet, its pediments and arches reminiscent not of the temple but the grotto, might have been pinned to the bosom of a gentleman's estate in the Midlands; and one would not have been surprised, had one approached it more nearly, to find the frosted turf indented with the hooves of the Pytchley. 'Why, she is like a very little child,' he thought, laughing. 'I will lay a wager from the manner she looks toward it that the lodge has instantly become a type of rural simplicity to her, and she is wishing that the King would hear her play and give it to her as a present, and she could live there like a nymph on milk and nuts and berries ! The sweet fool ! Well, I wish I were the King and could give her what she wants. Ah, what ineffable grace !'

For she had come suddenly to a standstill, had risen

REBECCA WEST

a little on her toes, and had drooped her head, as if she were fixedly regarding something on the path before her. She wavered slightly, like a steady flame. So prima ballerinas stand before the *pas seul*, if they are excellent.

‘Shall I speak to her now?’ he asked himself. ‘Before heaven I cannot long postpone myself that pleasure !’

From *Harriet Hume* (1929)

# X

D. H. LAWRENCE

## THE SCENT OF BLOOD

*All these people live in the same Nottinghamshire district: Lettie is torn between the rival attractions of George's physical manhood and Leslie's intellectual qualities. (D. H. Lawrence died in 1930.)*

WE went through the wood, and through the dishevelled border-land to the high road, through the border-land that should have been park-like, but which was shaggy with loose grass and yellow mole-hills, ragged with gorse and bramble and briar, with wandering old thorn-trees, and a queer clump of Scotch firs.

On the highway the leaves were falling, and they chattered under our steps. The water was mild and blue, and the corn stood drowsily in 'stook.'

We climbed the hill behind Highclose, and walked on along the upland, looking across towards the hills of arid Derbyshire, and seeing them not, because it was autumn. We came in sight of the head-stocks of the pit at Selsby, and of the ugly village standing blank and naked on the brow of the hill.

Lettie was in very high spirits. She laughed and joked continually. She picked bunches of hips and stuck them in her dress. Having got a thorn in her finger from a spray of blackberries, she went to Leslie to have it squeezed out. We were all quite gay as we

turned off the high road and went along the bridle path, with the woods on our right, the high Strelley hills shutting in our small valley in front, and the fields and the common to the left. About half way down the lane we heard the slur of the scythe-stone on the scythe. Lettie went to the hedge to see. It was George mowing the oats on the steep hillside where the machine could not go. His father was tying up the corn into sheaves.

Straightening his back, Mr. Saxton saw us, and called to us to come and help. We pushed through a gap in the hedge and went up to him.

'Now then,' said the father to me, 'take that coat off,' and to Lettie: 'Have you brought us a drink? No; - come, that sounds bad! Going a walk, I guess. You see what it is to get fat,' and he pulled a wry face as he bent over to tie the corn. He was a man beautifully ruddy and burly, in the prime of life.

'Show me, I'll do some,' said Lettie.

'Nay,' he answered gently, 'it would scratch your wrists and break your stays. Hark at my hands' - he rubbed them together - 'like sand-paper!'

George had his back to us, and had not noticed us. He continued to mow. Leslie watched him.

'That's a fine movement!' he exclaimed.

'Yes,' replied the father, rising very red in the face from the tying, 'and our George enjoys a bit o' mowing. It puts you in fine condition when you get over the first stiffness.'

We moved across to the standing corn. The sun being mild, George had thrown off his hat, and his black hair was moist and twisted into confused half-curls. Firmly planted, he swung with a beautiful rhythm from the waist. On the hip of his belted breeches hung the scythe-stone; his shirt, faded almost

white, was torn just above the belt, and showed the muscles of his back playing like lights upon the white sand of a brook. There was something exceedingly attractive in the rhythmic body.

I spoke to him, and he turned round. He looked straight at Lettie with a flashing, betraying smile. He was remarkably handsome. He tried to say some words of greeting, then he bent down and gathered an armful of corn, and deliberately bound it up.

Like him, Lettie had found nothing to say. Leslie, however, remarked:

‘I should think mowing is a nice exercise.’

‘It is,’ he replied, and continued, as Leslie picked up the scythe, ‘but it will make you sweat, and your hands will be sore.’

Leslie tossed his head a little, threw off his coat, and said briefly:

‘How do you do it?’ Without waiting for a reply he proceeded. George said nothing, but turned to Lettie.

‘You are picturesque,’ she said, a trifle awkwardly, ‘Quite fit for an Idyll.’

‘And you?’ he said.

She shrugged her shoulders, laughed, and turned to pick up a scarlet pimpernel.

‘How do you bind the corn?’ she asked.

He took some long straws, cleaned them, and showed her the way to hold them. Instead of attending, she looked at his hands, big, hard, inflamed by the snaith of the scythe.

‘I don’t think I could do it,’ she said.

‘No,’ he replied quietly, and watched Leslie mowing. The latter, who was wonderfully ready at everything, was doing fairly well, but he had not the invincible sweep of the other, nor did he make the same crisp crunching music.

'I bet he'll sweat,' said George.

'Don't you?' she replied.

'A bit - but I'm not dressed up.'

'Do you know,' she said suddenly, 'your arms tempt me to touch them. They are such a fine brown colour, and they look so hard.'

He held out one arm to her. She hesitated, then she swiftly put her finger tips on the smooth brown muscle, and drew them along. Quickly she hid her hand into the folds of her skirt, blushing.

He laughed a low, quiet laugh, at once pleasant and startling to hear.

'I wish I could work here,' she said, looking away at the standing corn, and the dim blue woods. He followed her look, and laughed quietly, with indulgent resignation.

'I do!' she said emphatically.

'You feel so fine,' he said, pushing his hand through his open shirt front, and gently rubbing the muscles of his side. 'It's a pleasure to work or to stand still. It's a pleasure to yourself - your own physique.'

She looked at him, full at his physical beauty, as if he were some great firm bud of life.

Leslie came up, wiping his brow.

'Jove,' said he, 'I do perspire.'

George picked up his coat and helped him into it; saying:

'You may take a chill.'

'It's a jolly nice form of exercise,' said he.

George, who had been feeling one finger tip, now took out his pen-knife and proceeded to dig a thorn from his hand.

'What a hide you must have,' said Leslie.

Lettie said nothing, but she recoiled slightly.

The father, glad of an excuse to straighten his back and to chat, came to us.

'You'd soon had enough,' he said, laughing to Leslie.

George startled us with a sudden, 'Halloo.' We turned, and saw a rabbit, which had burst from the corn, go coursing through the hedge, dodging and bounding the sheaves. The standing corn was a patch along the hill-side some fifty paces in length, and ten or so in width.

'I didn't think there'd have been any in,' said the father, picking up a short rake, and going to the low wall of the corn. We all followed.

'Watch !' said the father, 'if you see the heads of the corn shake !'

We prowled round the patch of corn.

'Hold ! Look out !' shouted the father excitedly, and immediately after a rabbit broke from the cover.

'Ay - Ay - Ay,' was the shout, 'turn him - turn him !' We set off full pelt. The bewildered little brute, scared by Leslie's wild running and crying, turned from its course, and dodged across the hill, threading its terrified course through the maze of lying sheaves, spurting on in a painful zigzag, now bounding over an untied bundle of corn, now swerving from the sound of a shout. The little wretch was hard pressed; George rushed upon it. It darted into some fallen corn, but he had seen it, and had fallen on it. In an instant he was up again, and the little creature was dangling from his hand.

We returned, panting, sweating, our eyes flashing, to the edge of the standing corn. I heard Lettie calling, and turning round saw Emily and the two children entering the field as they passed from school.

'There's another !' shouted Leslie.

I saw the oat-tops quiver. 'Here ! Here !' I yelled. The animal leaped out, and made for the

hedge. George and Leslie, who were on that side, dashed off, turned him, and he coursed back our way. I headed him off to the father who swept in pursuit for a short distance, but who was too heavy for the work. The little beast made towards the gate, but this time Mollie, with her hat in her hand and her hair flying, whirled upon him, and she and the little fragile lad sent him back again. The rabbit was getting tired. It dodged the sheaves badly, running towards the top hedge. I went after it. If I could have let myself fall on it I could have caught it, but this was impossible to me, and I merely prevented its dashing through the hole into safety. It raced along the hedge bottom. George tore after it. As he was upon it, it darted into the hedge. He fell flat, and shot his hand into the gap. But it had escaped. He lay there, panting in great sobs, and looking at me with eyes in which excitement and exhaustion struggled like flickering light and darkness. When he could speak, he said, 'Why didn't you fall on top of it?'

'I couldn't,' said I.

We returned again. The two children were peering into the thick corn also. We thought there was nothing more. George began to mow. As I walked round I caught sight of a rabbit skulking near the bottom corner of the patch. Its ears lay pressed against its back; I could see the palpitation of the heart under the brown fur, and I could see the shining dark eyes looking at me. I felt no pity for it, but still I could not actually hurt it. I beckoned to the father. He ran up, and aimed a blow with the rake. There was a sharp little cry which sent a hot pain through me as if I had been cut. But the rabbit ran out, and instantly I forgot the cry, and gave pursuit, fairly feeling my fingers stiffen to choke it. It was all lame.

#### PROSE AT PRESENT

Leslie was upon it in a moment, and he almost pulled its head off in his excitement to kill it.

I looked up. The girls were at the gate, just turning away.

'There are no more,' said the father.

At that instant Mary shouted.

'There's one down this hole.'

The hole was too small for George to get his hand in, so we dug it out with the rake handle. The stick went savagely down the hole, and there came a squeak.

'Mice!' said George, and as he said it the mother slid out. Somebody knocked her on the back, and the hole was opened out. Little mice seemed to swarm everywhere. It was like killing insects. We counted nine little ones lying dead.

'Poor brute,' said George, looking at the mother, 'What a job she must have had rearing that lot!' He picked her up, handled her curiously and with pity. Then he said, 'Well, I may as well finish this to-night!'

His father took another scythe from off the hedge, and together they soon laid the proud, quivering heads low. Leslie and I tied up as they mowed, and soon all was finished.

The beautiful day was flushing to die. Over in the west the mist was gathering bluer. The intense stillness was broken by the rhythmic hum of the engines at the distant coal-mine, as they drew up the last bantles of men. As we walked across the fields the tubes of stubble tinkled like dulcimers. The scent of the corn began to rise gently. The last cry of the pheasants came from the wood, and the little clouds of birds were gone.

From *The White Peacock* (1911)

## XI

# CHRISTOPHER MORLEY

# GEORGE'S REVERIE

*Late summer evening: George, married to Phyllis, who is in the house preparing for a picnic next day, courts reverie outside: he feels in love with Joyce, their guest, whom at one point he imagines to be with him.*

*The book has a remarkable plot: it starts with a children's party: one of them, Martin, has a vision of the same children in grown-up life: the vision forms the bulk of the book: the child emerges terrified at the darknesses and misunderstandings of the grown-up world: George is Martin's grown-up self.*

A SPLINTER of light drew him to the table under the pine trees. The jug and glasses, left there since lunch time; mutely pathetic, as forgotten things always are. There was still a heeltap of tea in one of the tumblers, he drank it and found it sirupy with sugar. It's a mistake, he thought, to eat sweet things late at night: they turn to sour in the morning. Night is the time for something bitter.

In the house, yellow squares flashed on and off. Downstairs, he could see Joyce's shadow against the blind. At the other end of the building, in the gable, the spare-room window went dark. Martin had slipped off to bed rather oddly after their game. In the embarrassment of Joyce's momentary dizziness he had simply gone, without a word. George found himself thinking that much of the evening's difficulty was due to this bumpkin stranger. He was probably

well-meaning, but either with his idiotic pleasantries or a silent smirk of censure he had a gift for blighting things. There was nothing about him that you could put precise finger on, but he had a way of making one feel guilty. How queerly, too, he had looked at Joyce.

The evening was changing. The air had shifted toward the northwest; suddenly, over the comb of the overhanging dune, a silvery spinnaker of cloud came drifting. It was like a great puff of steam, so close and silent it frightened him. For an instant, passing under the moon, this lovely island of softness darkened the night to a foggy grey. It was something strange, a secret between himself and the weather, encouraging his silly wits not to be afraid of the desperate magic of fancy, the fear and tenderness hidden in men's hearts. . . .

. . . The moment had passed. Life had gone by him, while he was fretting over paltry trifles, and left him a drudge. There was nothing to do but go indoors and work on the booklet. How exciting that brochure would be, what marvellous advertising, if he could really tell what summer was like at the Island. Why, the company would have to run special trains. The very aisles would be packed, people sitting on upturned suitcases, if they knew that this dangerous coast was the place where Temptation really broke through . . . where the old Demiurge laid his cards on the table. It would become a Resort — yes, an asylum for lunatics, people ridiculed by transfusions of the moon. How a poet might write it, telling the colour of that world. Warm tawny flanks of sand hills sprawled like panthers. The sun a coal of topaz, veiled in white flame that sheeted the whole summit of sky. Light so fierce one never looked upward. Wherever one turned was a burning and a glitter; the air was a lens and gathered

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all its rays into one stream. Always one's knuckles were sweet with salty smell. Repressed thunder yawning in the blue elixir of the afternoon; deep, deep afternoon, penetrated with lawless beauty. The small sorry whisper of the wind sang it in the keen scimitar grasses; smooth beams of driftwood, faded by the sea, felt it; the sandpipers, drunk with it, staggered on twiggy legs. Bronzed thighs and shoulders, shining in the green shallows marbled with foam . . .

The transitive billow of cloud slipped away beyond the roof; again the strong resinous air was clarified, streamed with gracious light. His mind almost smiled at his fatuity: the sentiment did not graduate into an actual smile, but spent itself in a tiny whiff of self-deprecation through his nostrils. He stretched upward, raising his arms, standing tiptoed, feeling the calf-tendons tighten and coolness in his fingers as the blood sank. His hands met a low limb that reached across his head. He gripped it and chinned himself. There was good animal satisfaction in feeling the quiver in the biceps, the hanging weight of his body. Well, we're not done for yet, he said to himself. No, sir, not yet. He capered a few steps on the silky floor of needles, and pulled out his pipe. . . .

She was coming. He saw her coming, swiftly across the lawn. No, not swiftly; evenly was the word; unquestioningly; as he had always known she would come. His mouth was open to warn her of the croquet hoops, but she passed surely among them. When he saw her face, he knew this was something not to be spoiled by words. Her face was enough.

In that unreasonable glamour she was pure fable: the marble (Oh, too cold, too hard a word) come to life. There was no pang, no trouble, no desire: he knew only that there is some answer to the gorgeous secret:

the secret that the world is in conspiracy to deny—  
No, not to deny; more cunning than that: to admit  
and pass heedless on. There was meaning in every-  
thing; significance in the shapes of things. The black  
plumes and pinnacles of the trees were fashioned exactly  
so, could never have been otherwise.

They were away from rooms and roofs. They were  
on the beach; the tide was far ebb'd, they ran over  
mirrors of sand, they were in sparkling black water  
milder than air. Still there were no words; their white  
bodies gleamed in silver, laved in snowy fans of surf.  
They were just themselves, chafing impediments were  
gone; nothing was between them and they wanted no-  
thing. They ran, breathing warmly, to burrow in the  
powdery cliff, where the acid smell of sharp grasses  
sifted down from the dunes. They lay in a hollow of  
sand; she curled against him, nestled smoothly close,  
he could feel her thrilling with small quivers of joy.  
There was no pang, no trouble, no desire; only peace.

Everything else they had ever known had been only  
an interruption. This had always been happening,  
underneath. It was the unknown music for which  
their poem had been written. They were quit of the  
pinch of Time, the facetious nudge of Custom. Quiet-  
ness was in them, patient like fresh water in a thirsty  
throat. Here was the fulfilment men plot and swink  
for: and how different from crude anticipation. What  
could there be now but pity and kindness? Here was  
triumph: Man, the experimenting artist, had created  
fantasy above the grasp of his audience, Nature. Like  
any true artist, he must always play a little above his  
audience's head.

'Now I'm going to tell you the truth,' he said  
happily, and waited a moment for the luxury of her  
voice.

CHRISTOPHER MORLEY

She was silent. He turned to look; her face was anxious. 'Why is it,' he said gently, 'that when you announce you're going to tell the truth, people always expect something disagreeable ?'

Then he knew that the sand was chill and gritty. A breeze was blowing, the light was dim and meagre. This was not the glad forgiving sun but the cold and glassy moon.

'No, no !' she cried. 'You must never tell the truth in a dream. If you do . . . it happens.'

'But this was a lovely truth,' he began. A window snapped into brightness beside him, just above his head. Phyllis was looking from the pantry.

'George ! What on earth are you muttering about out there ? Come in and help me cut sandwiches.'

From *Thunder on the Left* (1926)

## XII

### ERNEST HEMINGWAY

### THE ESCAPE

*This is an episode in the adventures of a young American serving as a Red Cross officer with the Italian army. There has been a retreat and considerable disorganization. The battle-police intervene.*

'TAKE him back with the others,' the first officer said. They took me down behind the line of officers below the road toward a group of people in a field by the river bank. As we walked toward them shots were fired. I saw flashes of the rifles and heard the reports. We came up to the group. There were four officers standing together, with a man in front of them with a carabiniere on each side of him. A group of men were standing guarded by carabinieri. Four other carabinieri stood near the questioning officers, leaning on their carbines. They were wide-hatted carabinieri. The two who had me shoved me in with the group waiting to be questioned. I looked at the man the officers were questioning. He was the fat, grey-haired, little lieutenant-colonel they had taken out of the column. The questioners had all the efficiency, coldness and command of themselves of Italians who are firing and are not being fired on.

'Your Brigade?'

He told them.

'Regiment?'

He told them.

ERNEST HEMINGWAY

‘Why are you not with your regiment?’

He told them.

‘Do you not know that an officer should be with his troops?’

He did.

That was all. Another officer spoke.

‘It is you and such as you that have let the barbarians on to the sacred soil of the fatherland.’

‘I beg your pardon,’ said the lieutenant-colonel.

‘It is because of treachery such as yours that we have lost the fruits of victory.’

‘Have you ever been in a retreat?’ the lieutenant-colonel asked.

‘Italy should never retreat.’

We stood there in the rain and listened to this. We were facing the officers and the prisoner stood in front and a little to one side of us.

‘If you are going to shoot me,’ the lieutenant-colonel said, ‘please shoot me at once without further questioning. The questioning is stupid.’ He made the sign of the cross. The officers spoke together. One wrote something on a pad of paper.

‘Abandoned his troops, ordered to be shot,’ he said.

Two carabinieri took the lieutenant-colonel to the river bank. He walked in the rain, an old man with his hat off, a carabiniere on either side. I did not watch them shoot him but I heard the shots. They were questioning someone else. This officer too was separated from his troops. He was not allowed to make an explanation. He cried when they read the sentence from the pad of paper and cried while they led him off, and they were questioning another when they shot him. They made a point of being intent on questioning the next man while the man who had been questioned before was being shot. In this way there

was obviously nothing they could do about it. I did not know whether I should wait to be questioned or make a break now. I was obviously a German in Italian uniform. I saw how their minds worked; if they had minds and if they worked. They were all young men and they were saving their country. The second army was being reformed beyond the Tagliamento. They were executing officers of the rank of major and above who were separated from their troops. They were also dealing summarily with German agitators in Italian uniform. They wore steel helmets. Only two of us had steel helmets. Some of the carabinieri had them. The other carabinieri wore the wide hat. Airplanes we called them. We stood in the rain and were taken out one at a time to be questioned and shot. So far they had shot every one they had questioned. The questioners had that beautiful detachment and devotion to stern justice of men dealing in death without being in any danger of it. They were questioning a full colonel of a line regiment. Three more officers had just been put in with us.

Where was his regiment?

I looked at the carabinieri. They were looking at the newcomers. The others were looking at the colonel. I ducked down, pushed between two men, and ran for the river, my head down. I tripped at the edge and went in with a splash. The water was very cold and I stayed under as long as I could. I could feel the current swirl me and I stayed under until I thought I could never come up. The minute I came up I took a breath and went down again. It was easy to stay under with so much clothing and my boots. When I came up the second time I saw a piece of timber ahead of me and reached it and held on with one hand. I kept my head behind it and did not even

look over it. I did not want to see the bank. There were shots when I ran and shots when I came up the first time. I heard them when I was almost above water. There were no shots now. The piece of timber swung in the current and I held it with one hand. I looked at the bank. It seemed to be going by very fast. There was much wood in the stream. The water was very cold. We passed the brush of an island above the water. I held on to the timber with both hands and let it take me along. The shore was out of sight now.

You do not know how long you are in a river when the current moves swiftly. It seems a long time and it may be very short. The water was cold and in flood and many things passed that had been floated off the banks when the river rose. I was lucky to have a heavy timber to hold on to, and I lay in the icy water with my chin on the wood, holding as easily as I could with both hands. I was afraid of cramps and I hoped we would move toward the shore. We went down the river in a long curve. It was beginning to be light enough so I could see the bushes along the shore-line. There was a brush island ahead and the current moved toward the shore. I wondered if I should take off my boots and clothes and try to swim ashore, but decided not to. I had never thought of anything but that I would reach the shore some way, and I would be in a bad position if I landed barefoot. I had to get to Mestre some way.

I watched the shore come close, then swing away, then come closer again. We were floating more slowly. The shore was very close now. I could see twigs on the willow bush. The timber swung slowly so that the bank was behind me and I knew we were in an eddy. We went slowly around. As I saw the bank again, very close now, I tried holding with one

arm and kicking and swimming the timber toward the bank with the other, but I did not bring it any closer. I was afraid we would move out of the eddy and, holding with one hand, I drew up my feet so they were against the side of the timber and shoved hard toward the bank. I could see the brush, but even with my momentum and swimming as hard as I could, the current was taking me away. I thought then I would drown because of my boots, but I thrashed and fought through the water, and when I looked up the bank was coming toward me, and I kept thrashing and swimming in a heavy-footed panic until I reached it. I hung to the willow branch and did not have strength to pull myself up but I knew I would not drown now. It had never occurred to me on the timber that I might drown. I felt hollow and sick in my stomach and chest from the effort, and I held to the branches and waited. When the sick feeling was gone I pulled in to the willow bushes and rested again, my arms around some brush, holding tight with my hands to the branches. Then I crawled out, pushed on through the willows and on to the bank. It was half-daylight and I saw no one. I lay flat on the bank and heard the river and the rain.

After a while I got up and started along the bank. I knew there was no bridge across the river until Latisana. I thought I might be opposite San Vito. I began to think out what I should do. Ahead there was a ditch running into the river. I went toward it. So far I had seen no one and I sat down by some bushes along the bank of the ditch and took off my shoes and emptied them of water. I took off my coat, took my wallet with my papers and my money all wet in it out of the inside pocket and then wrung the coat out. I took off my trousers and wrung them too, then my

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shirt and underclothing. I slapped and rubbed myself and then dressed again. I had lost my cap.

Before I put on my coat I cut the cloth stars off my sleeves and put them in the inside pocket with my money. My money was wet but was all right. I counted it. There were three thousand and some lire. My clothes felt wet and clammy and I slapped my arms to keep the circulation going. I had woollen underwear and I did not think I would catch cold if I kept moving. They had taken my pistol at the road and I put the holster under my coat. I had no cape and it was cold in the rain. I started up the bank of the canal. It was daylight and the country was wet, low and dismal looking. The fields were bare and wet; a long way away I could see a campanile rising out of the plain. I came up on to a road. Ahead I saw some troops coming down the road. I limped along the side of the road and they passed me and paid no attention to me. They were a machine-gun detachment going up toward the river. I went on down the road.

That day I crossed the Venetian plain. It is a low level country and under the rain it is even flatter. Toward the sea there are salt marshes and very few roads. The roads all go along the river mouths to the sea and to cross the country you must go along the paths beside the canals. I was working across the country from the north to the south and had crossed two railway lines and many roads and finally I came out at the end of a path on to a railway line where it ran beside a marsh. It was the main line from Venice to Trieste, with a high solid embankment, a solid roadbed and double track. Down the track a way was a flag-station and I could see soldiers on guard. Up the line there was a bridge over a stream that flowed into the marsh. I could see a guard too at the bridge. Crossing the

fields to the north I had seen a train pass on this railroad, visible a long way across the flat plain, and I thought a train might come from Portogruaro. I watched the guards and lay down on the embankment so that I could see both ways along the track. The guard at the bridge walked a little way up the line toward where I lay, then turned and went back toward the bridge. I lay, and was hungry, and waited for the train. The one I had seen was so long that the engine moved it very slowly, and I was sure I could get aboard it. After I had almost given up hoping for one I saw a train coming. The engine, coming straight on, grew larger slowly. I looked at the guard at the bridge. He was walking on the near side of the bridge but on the other side of the track. That would put him out of sight when the train passed. I watched the engine come nearer. It was working hard. I could see there were many cars. I knew there would be guards on the train, and I tried to see where they were, but, keeping out of sight, I could not. The engine was almost to where I was lying. When it came opposite, working and puffing even on the level, and I saw the engineer pass, I stood up and stepped up close to the passing cars. If the guards were watching I was a less suspicious object standing beside the track. Several closed freight-cars passed. Then I saw a low open car of the sort they call gondolas coming, covered with canvas. I stood until it had almost passed, then jumped and caught the rear hand-rods and pulled up. I crawled down between the gondola and the shelter of the high freight-car behind. I did not think anyone had seen me. I was holding to the hand-rods and crouching low, my feet on the coupling. We were almost opposite the bridge. I remembered the guard. As we passed him he looked at me. He was a boy and

his helmet was too big for him. I stared at him contemptuously and he looked away. He thought I had something to do with the train.

We were past. I saw him still looking uncomfortable, watching the other cars pass and I stopped to see how the canvas was fastened. It had grummets and was laced down at the edge with cord. I took out my knife, cut the cord and put my arm under. There were hard bulges under the canvas that tightened in the rain. I looked up and ahead. There was a guard on the freight-car ahead but he was looking forward. I let go of the hand-rails and ducked under the canvas. My forehead hit something that gave me a violent bump and I felt blood on my face but I crawled on in and lay flat. Then I turned around and fastened down the canvas.

I was in under the canvas with guns. They smelled cleanly of oil and grease. I lay and listened to the rain on the canvas and the clicking of the car over the rails. There was a little light came through and I lay and looked at the guns. They had their canvas jackets on. I thought they must have been sent ahead from the third army. The bump on my forehead was swollen and I stopped the bleeding by lying still and letting it coagulate, then picked away the dried blood except over the cut. It was nothing. I had no handkerchief, but feeling with my fingers I washed away where the dried blood had been, with rain-water that dripped from the canvas, and wiped it clean with the sleeve of my coat. I did not want to look conspicuous. I knew I would have to get out before they got to Mestre because they would be taking care of these guns. They had no guns to lose or forget about. I was terrifically hungry.

From *A Farewell to Arms* (1929).

### XIII

### E. E. CUMMINGS

### UNDER ARREST

*The author, after a short period of voluntary service with an American Red Cross section attached to the French army, was by some extravagant confusion interned by the French in a camp-prison for suspects. In 'The Enormous Room,' a work of singular creative originality, he describes his experiences in this prison (v-f-g = very fat gendarme).*

WITH a little tooty shriek, the funny train tottered in. My captors had taken pains to place themselves at the wrong end of the platform. Now they encouraged me to HurryHurryHurry.

I managed to get under the load and tottered the length of the train to a car especially reserved. There was one other criminal, a beautifully-smiling, shortish man, with a very fine blanket wrapped in a waterproof oilskin cover. We grinned at each other (the most cordial salutation, by the way, that I have ever exchanged with a human being) and sat down opposite one another – he, plus my baggage which he helped me lift in, occupying one seat; the gendarme-sandwich, of which I formed the *pièce de résistance*, the other.

The engine got under way after several feints; which pleased the Germans so that they sent seven scout planes right over the station, train, us *et tout*. All the French antiaircraft guns went off together for the sake of sympathy; the guardians of the peace squinted cautiously from their respective windows, and then began

a debate on the number of the enemy while their prisoners smiled at each other appreciatively.

*'Il fait chaud,'* said this divine man, prisoner, criminal, or what not, as he offered me a glass of wine in the form of a huge tin cup overflowed from the *bidon*, in his slightly unsteady and delicately made hand. He is a Belgian. Volunteered at beginning of war. *Permission* at Paris, overstayed by one day. When he reported to his officer, the latter announced that he was a deserter — ‘I said to him, “It is funny. It is funny I should have come back, of my own free will, to my company. I should have thought that being a deserter I would have preferred to remain in Paris.”’ The wine was terribly cold, and I thanked my divine host.

Never have I tasted such wine.

They had given me a chunk of war-bread in place of blessing when I left Noyon. I bit into it with renewed might. But the divine man across from me immediately produced a sausage, half of which he laid simply upon my knee. The halving was done with a large keen *poilu’s couteau*.

I have not tasted a sausage since.

The pigs on my either hand had by this time overcome their respective inertias and were chomping cheek-murdering chunks. They had quite a lay-out, a regular picnic-lunch elaborate enough for kings or even presidents. The v-f-g in particular annoyed me by uttering alternate chompings and belchings. All the time he ate he kept his eyes half-shut; and a mist overspread the sensual meadows of his coarse face.

His two reddish eyes rolled devouringly toward the blanket in its waterproof roll. After a huge gulp of wine he said thickly (for his huge moustache was crusted with saliva-tinted half-moistened shreds of food), ‘You will have no use for that *machine, là-bas*.

They are going to take everything away from you when you get there, you know. I could use it nicely. I have wanted such a piece of *caoutchouc* for a great while, in order to make me an *imperméable*. Do you see?' (Gulp Swallow.)

Here I had an inspiration. I would save the blanket cover by drawing these brigands' attention to myself. At the same time I would satisfy my inborn taste for the ridiculous. 'Have you a pencil?' I said. 'Because I am an artist in my own country, and will do your picture.'

He gave me a pencil. I don't remember where the paper came from. I posed him in a pig-like position and the picture made him chew his moustache. The apache thought it very droll. I should do his picture too, at once. I did my best; though protesting that he was too beautiful for my pencil, which remark he countered by murmuring (as he screwed his moustache another notch), 'Never mind, you will try.' Oh, yes I would try all right, all right. He objected, I recall to the nose.

By this time the divine 'deserter' was writhing with joy. 'If you please, Monsieur,' he whispered radiantly 'it would be too great an honour, but if you could — I should be overcome . . .'

Tears (for some strange reason) came into my eyes

He handled his picture sacredly, criticized it with precision and care, finally bestowed it in his inner pocket. Then we drank. It happened that the train stopped and the apache was persuaded to go out and get his prisoner's *bidon* filled. Then we drank again.

He smiled as he told me he was getting ten years. Three years at solitary confinement was it, and seven working in a gang on the road? That would not be so bad. He wishes he was not married, had not a little

child. 'The bachelors are lucky in this war' – he smiled.

Now the gendarmes began cleaning their beards, brushing their stomachs, spreading their legs, collecting their baggage. The reddish eyes, little and cruel, woke from the trance of digestion and settled with positive ferocity on their prey. 'You will have no use . . .'

Silently the sensitive, gentle hands of the divine prisoner undid the blanket-cover. Silently the long, tired, well-shaped arms passed it across to the brigand at my left side. With a grunt of satisfaction the brigand stuffed it in a large pouch, taking pains that it should not show. Silently the divine eyes said to mine: 'What can we do, we criminals?' And we smiled at each other for the last time, the eyes and my eyes.

A station. The apache descends. I follow with my numerous *affaires*. The divine man follows me – the v-f-g him.

The blanket-roll containing my large fur-coat got more and more unrolled; finally I could not possibly hold it.

It fell. To pick it up, I must take the sack off my back.

Then comes a voice, 'Allow me, if you please, monsieur' – and the sack has disappeared. Blindly and dumbly I stumbled on with the roll; and so at length we come into the yard of a little prison; and the divine man bowed under my great sack . . . I never thanked him. When I turned, they'd taken him away, and the sack stood accusingly at my feet.

Through the complete disorder of my numbed mind flicker jabbings of strange tongues. Some high boy's voice is appealing to me in Belgian, Italian, Polish, Spanish, and – beautiful English. 'Hey, Jack, give me a cigarette, Jack . . .'

I lift my eyes. I am standing in a tiny oblong space. A sort of court. All around, two-story wooden barracks. Little crude staircases lead up to doors heavily chained and immensely padlocked. More like ladders than stairs. Curious hewn windows, smaller in proportion than the slits in a doll's house. Are these faces behind the slits? The doors bulge incessantly under the shock of bodies hurled against them from within. The whole dirty *nouveau* business about to crumble.

Glance one.

Glance two: directly before me. A wall with many bars fixed across one minute opening. At the opening a dozen, fifteen, grins. Upon the bars hands, scraggy and bluish white. Through the bars stretchings of lean arms, incessant stretchings. The grins leap at the window, hands belonging to them catch hold, arms belonging to the hands stretch in my direction . . . an instant; then new grins leap from behind and knock off the first grins which go down with a fragile crashing like glass smashed: hands wither and break, arms streak out of sight, sucked inward.

In the huge potpourri of misery a central figure clung, shaken but undislodged. Clung like a monkey to central bars. Clung like an angel to a harp. Calling pleasantly in a high boyish voice: 'O Jack, give me a cigarette.'

A handsome face, dark, Latin smile, musical fingers strong.

I waded suddenly through a group of gendarmes (they stood around me watching with a disagreeable curiosity my reaction to this). Strode fiercely to the window.

Trillions of hands.

Quadrillions of itching fingers.

The angel-monkey received the package of cigarettes

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politely, disappearing with it into howling darkness. I heard his high boy's voice distributing cigarettes. Then he leapt into sight, poised gracefully against two central bars, saying, 'Thank you, Jack, good boy' . . . 'Thanks, *merci, gracias* . . .' a deafening din of gratitude reeked from within.

'Put your baggage in here,' quoth an angry voice. 'No, you will not take anything but one blanket in your cell, understand.' In French. Evidently the head of the house speaking. I obeyed. A corpulent soldier importantly led me to my cell. My cell is two doors away from the monkey-angel, on the same side. The high boy-voice, centralized in a torrent-like halo of stretchings, followed my back. The head himself unlocked a lock. I marched coldly in. The fat soldier locked and chained my door. Four feet went away. I felt in my pocket, finding four cigarettes. I am sorry I did not give these also to the monkey - to the angel. Lifted my eyes, and saw my own harp.

From *The Enormous Room* (1922)

XIV  
C. E. MONTAGUE  
OVERTURE

*C. E. Montague (who died in 1928) is famous for his work on the 'Manchester Guardian': he has left two volumes of short stories, four of essays and papers, and three novels, all in the same high spirit. This is the prefatory essay from the 'The Right Place,' as he calls it, 'a book of pleasures.'*

YOU may wonder how it will feel, to find you are old, and able to travel no more. Perhaps to sit out, with your legs up, in an invalid chair on a lawn when the warm weather comes, and to finger a book of time-tables for trains, and to think how at this hour the day express from Paris is probably nearing Mulhouse and the evening freshness of air that has blown across snow is coming in at the windows; soon the train will be slowing to clank into the station at Bâle just when the first lamps are lit in the town and look gay in the twilight. How the Rhine must be swishing along, a plashing, glimmering coolness heard more than seen, below the balconied windows of rooms at the Three Kings Hotel, where the blest, who have just come from England, are giving a sigh of content as they throw their dusty gloves down on a bed.

Perhaps to lie awake, as the old do, through English August dawns, remembering many past awakenings in trains when day was breaking over Delémont or Porrentruy, and houses half seen through the blanching

windows seemed to have taken wide eaves upon themselves during the night; brooks, silent all across France, had begun to make little jovial noises, and clouds had come down from the sky to tumble about on the fields. To live with dim ghosts – quite kindly ghosts, but dim – of the warm blooded hours of old autumn journeys to Italy, up to meet the bleaching chill that creeps in October from Goeshenen down to Lucerne; and then the plunge into the tunnel's murmurous darkness under the very hub, the middle boss of all Europe, the rocky knot in which all her stone sinews are tied at their ends into one central bunch; and then the emergence, translating you out of a Teuton into a Latin world, from grizzled wintry tonelessness to burnished lustre, all the lingering opulence of sunfed brown and yellow, purple and crimson and rose – Airolo, Bellinzona, Lugano, all aglow and deep-hearted, like rubies or wine in that Giorgionian champaign of olive and mulberry.

The blasphemies that have been written and talked ! I do not mean so much the irreligious rubbish about Hell after this life. Man, as a whole, has learnt reverence enough to withdraw that grossest of all the slurs which he put, in his moody, ignorant youth, on the goodness of God. Much of his talk about Heaven itself has been sacrilegious enough. When the Claudio of *Measure for Measure*, the poor gluttonous sheep that had fatted himself for the butcher, was wriggling and swerving away from the knife, his bleating was all about positive post-mortem pains that he had heard tell of. Burning and freezing were much on his mind, and blowing about, round the world, in the grip of high winds, and rotting without anæsthetics. He knew by heart the pick of all the cruel freaks that men made after the image of beasts used to impute to a

god that they had made after the image of themselves. But if the terrified weakling had had any brains he might have been almost as deeply disturbed by a review of the set of sensations commonly advertised in his time as amenities laid up in Heaven to crown the just and the forgiven.

Some of these subtler terrors of death survive in a few unfortunate minds to this day. The last has yet to be heard of the flavourless heaven of tireless limbs and sexless souls, tearless eyes and choirs of effortless and infallible intonation. Imagine eternal youth with no impulse to walk in the ways of its heart, and in the sight of its eyes, and deposed for ever from its august and precarious stewardship of the clean blood of a race ! Conceive the light that never was on sea or land, no longer caught in broken gleams through visionary forests, but blazing away like the lamps on common lodging-house stairs; and the peace that passeth all understanding explored and explained, to the last letter, inside and out ! Think, if you can bear to do it, what your existence would be without wonder, or any need for valiant hope, or for resolution unassisted by hope, a life no longer salt with savoursome vicissitudes; all the hardy, astringent conditions of joy, and the purchase-money of rapture, abolished for ever. No, better not think of it. 'It is too horrible.'

Life must have been pretty hard in some of the ages, that any prospect so dreadful should have illuded people's minds as a compensation or a deliverance. Perhaps if one's body were chained for life to an oar in a galley, or sold into some darksome underground slavery, like a pit pony, one might, without positive meanness or impudence, put in a claim upon God for some portion of pleasure and ease hereafter in lieu of all that one had missed. But you and I—— ! We

that grew up by the Thames among roses and apples, and walked home from school of an evening down the nave of St. Paul's and through the courts of the Temple, and heard the chimes from Oxford towers at midnight and lived elately in the rhythms of her jocund choruses and racing oars ! We that have failed and thriven and been rich and poor, on our little scale, and have been happy in our love and found work after our hearts and rambled in sun and mist over Pennine and Cumbrian hills and seen sunset and dawn from great peaks of the Alps and across several seas and over lost battles and victories – what sort of peasant slaves should we be to come full from the feast with a whine for victuals more savoury ? Away to Mrs. Gamp, wheresoever she be, with talk of vales of tears, and life's dull round, and stony places of pilgrimage. There is no hiding it – we like the stones, and always did, and the round has been a merry-go-round, and against the whole vale there is not one serious word to be said.

Perhaps a proper canniness, a sound business instinct, ought to keep men and women from owning how good a time they have had since they were set down on the earth. Early man dealt pretty shrewdly with his gods; he drove hard bargains with them; he even starved or beat them when they had not done as well as they might. And some traces of this prudent instinct are still astir in mankind. Careful souls seem to whisper to themselves that there may be much to come yet; the great 'deal' has only begun; were it not rash to let out how pleased and astonished you are with the terms you have hitherto got ? For if you do that in a market, the other party sees daylight at once; he thinks what a fool he has been to offer so much, when less would have done: and so he stiffens his terms. And

no doubt there is some very respectable warrant for viewing your soul's relations with God as strict business matters.

*Whatever, Lord, we lend to Thee  
Repaid a thousandfold will be;  
Then gladly will we give to Thee.*

It sounds like good sense. And yet a sneaking doubt will creep in. We cannot feel so sure about that dour driver of bargains, against whom we are advised to take these sagacious precautions. Another God we can conceive; but not, with any vividness, a God with whom you have to be careful lest He see what a soft thing He has given you.

And then there is another doubt. Haggle we never so wisely, is there any tremendous coup left for our arts to bring off? Heaven is here already; no flaming swords keep from the gate the man that knows how to value the garden. 'I am in love with this green earth; the face of town and country; the unspeakable rural solitudes and the sweet security of streets. I would set up my tabernacle here.' Of what avail to bargain further, when you have got all? Why not give yourself away, as that heaven gives itself, and recklessly confess the amenity of your condition ever since you first shivered and grinned with a small boy's delight in the feel of a pavement through the thin rubber soles of your shoes, and snuffed up queer and engaging fumes or romance with mixed smell of engines and fog under the resonant roof of Waterloo station?

So at least, it befits me to plead, having to make, in the pages that follow, some undiplomatic admissions of full satisfaction with certain contents of life on the earth. The only misgiving about them which strikes me now as worth entertaining is Solomon's, lest the

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grinders should cease because they are few, and those that look out of the window be darkened. So here goes, before the panes have time to be fogged, or a grasshopper, such as the work of writing a little book, to become a burden.

From *The Right Place* (1924)

## XV

### EDMUND BLUNDEN

#### (i) URN BURIAL

‘**I**F you were to start clearing that old dyke and round about, you’d find – I don’t know what you wouldn’t find.’ This adjuration in various forms has been made to me by a dozen people, and I have thought of it by myself as many times; but I know I shall not act upon it. I admire the archæologists and am not the least frequent visitor to their share of the British Museum. But the question of my attempting to imitate them has been raised before and I was found wanting.

It was one Sunday evening particularly, long since, when I faltered into some promise of answering the question practically. My friend A. F. was at home, and half-led and half-thrust me into an armchair as if he feared I might be an elusive spirit of the past, with which at the moment he was especially concerned. My glance was upon a fragmentary and quite heathen little image which lay within his fender. He had been restoring its outlines with a sort of coloured putty, and seeing my glance he took up his blue-green statuette and comfortably proceeded with his experiment while he talked. ‘You know,’ he said, ‘ – this, by the way, isn’t one of my finds – I’m sure it would repay you to do a little digging in the country about you; yes, I know you religiously get the potatoes up every autumn, but I mean a little mild archæology.

You should come and live here; I want you to share my latest delvings. Where? O, you remember the place – the Tudor hall on the way to Spanlong Green. The owner told me one day, “I’ve been waiting for years for someone to come and dig up my ruin.” Well, I’ve tackled it. I begin to know as much about trenches as you do. I’m in the middle of it; shouldn’t be surprised at anything. Period upon period seems to have sealed itself in the ground. I’ve just been packing up some of the treasures for the opinion of the British Museum. I want dates.

‘Now let this be an example to you. Why don’t you look round in Staizley for spadework? I’ve an impression that it has never been explored, not in a full sense. Peg yourself down to an area; and I assure you you won’t be sorry that you started.’

This persuasive style began to operate. It occurred to me, of course, that there was an obstacle to my starting – my wonderful ignorance of the rules of the game. I could be fairly sure of discriminating between a molehill and a tumulus, but this was not a strong qualification. However, he was continuing. ‘Leave the bookshelves alone for several days at a stretch. Take your large Ordnance map and a spade.’

I reviewed, as I pedalled home, the state of antiquities in my village. After all, it was a genuine and persisting antiquity altogether. I fancied it presented the observer with a view of its past in its present. It had always been, surely, much as it was now; if it was antique, it was the same working personality as ever, like the old day labourer who crept about with his little cart and his apparently coeval and prodigiously goitred donkey – which went into his cottage and ate at his table. I thought of the timbers of the barns I passed, grooved and curved in such a way as testified

their experience elsewhere — perhaps aboard some ‘Armenia Merchant’ or ‘Jamaica Sloop’ — before they came here to complete centuries of meditations. I regretted, too, that one barn was standing roofless, for in it stood two rounded pillars of oak with carved capitals, which had a different style from anything even of Tudor workmanship, and were reputed to be nearer a thousand years old than five hundred. Above ground, despite our Trilby hats and dancing classes, we were all antiquity.

Perhaps I was a trifle shy of being known as an enquirer into our antiquity below ground. My neighbours would think me odd, and what character I had gained on the cricket ground for being normal might be soon lost. I thought of this, and reflected that I might draw parallels which would be protective. They too showed a certain vein of retrospective enthusiasm. When my critical acquaintance, the undertaker, upholsterer, carpenter, and unofficial apothecary, was thatching a cottage the year before, he had pulled a coin out of a hole. If one person during the next few days had told me emotionally that Will Prank had found ‘a Queen Anne sixpence,’ ten had done. Yet it was by chance and several months later that I heard how an outlying farmer had disinterred a series of funeral urns, which with good intentions he had delivered under a mackintosh sheet by one of his rattling wagons at the nearest museum.

Balancing all, I began to favour the advice given to me by my expert friend; and I considered the promise of a site or two. Below our football field from my window I could see a scene I liked — a grove, within whose shadow lay a steep cleft, always tuneful with the rilling play of a ploughland watercourse. Hereabouts, as I had heard in casual conversations, before

the smoke-room was too full, bones were dug up from time to time, and till lately a skull was to be seen. Into this solitary place of the foxglove and the wren, I realized, my field walks had almost always led me, much as if by reason of an unseen genius of the wood, or soil. To this point I made up my mind to go with a view to becoming a spy upon forgotten lives, and to proving that it would be for me as for A. F. :

*Sweet the fragments to explore  
Time's so kind to keep in store.*

I set out. The sunlight floated through the winter mist upon my walk, and yet I could not feel sunny within. As I drew near the grove, magpies got up from the stubble and made off through the trees with as ugly a call as they had for expressing disapproval. The rabbits ran for their sandy shelters, and the flocking tits would have none of me. At other times I might ignore these things, but now I felt: do I look a little ghoulish on this errand? Then all was still except the spring, sallying among goblin roots and stones, vapouring some of its water like a flower of water upon the dim air of its brown cavern; thence it went out with the voice of a child talking to itself. A swelling wind from somewhere near touched the oak and elder leaves, weary leaves, above me; it was a great sigh.

Crossing the brook, I had beneath me the suspect ground which I had selected for my recreation. It bore the traces of pick and shovel, though all but hidden by the years. It came to my memory that some called this place the Old Church – not that there was any written record of a church here. Others, when they talked of the skeletons turned up by shallow digging here, had defended the tradition of a battle

ages ago, and the hasty wholesale burial of the dead. In my indecision (I even glanced over my shoulder), I was glad that A. F. could not see his unworthy novice.

We may receive but what we give, they say; but whether the adage serves at some curious moments I doubt. I seemed to be receiving influences not my own. The calm, subdued, short-lived day, the melody and magnetic working of the stream in its dingle, the square church tower on the ridge in my view, the spined brown teazles shaking above my head, the white-rimmed, flat dock at my feet, the mute waste-land, perhaps a battlefield — these severally or together had a force to resist me and my spade. I felt the necessity of a bared forehead, and a bowed mind.

That failure is now part of my own remote history. It is too ridiculous to be narrated in self-defence, when I am now urged to spend my leisure in disturbing the mysterious dyke and terraces beyond the iris-garden. But it seemed anything but ridiculous that winter afternoon, and it certainly lies between me and my next attempt.

## (ii) BATTLEFIELD

The leaves fluttering down have now out-numbered their companions in the starlight, the moths; and several days have passed since we saw the bat vanish from the springing light of morning. The mushrooms, which leapt up under trees and out in the meadow with their peculiar determination, suddenly ceased, as though the calendar had necessarily to be observed; it was not the weather that drove them out, for a calmer current of nature gliding into the hard season could scarcely be imagined in England. A

mossy greenness still extends through the pastures, except where the moles have been working under such agreeable conditions. The violets in the orchard grass agree that the year is gentle. Above our walk, the appearances of old age are sharper against the watery blue. Enormous colonies of mistletoe, almost like brushwood faggots, are seen now on the less accessible timbers. In the walnut-tree one sees lodged several 'batts,' but they and the winds have knocked down the last nut, and the rats have hurried all that fell, when no one was looking, into their interstices of the farmhouse.

We shall hear soon how many sackfuls of walnut-shells were found when the war on these rats broke out. It is a little curious that the rat does not acquire a taste for crab-apples, which he could have in such cartloads along the channel of the brook. But he has no encouragement from the rest of the parish. If there is a god of wild apples, I think that he must have the patience possible to celestial beings. Annually he makes the hedgerows bright and odorous with his healthy fruit, and annually the harvest is scorned.

In the yellow and the silver light, towards the early sunset, the site of a mansion where, as every one for miles knows, centuries of wealth and high spirits passed, begins to look more measurable. The insolence of summer growths, that made a jungle where there had been chapel, and courtyard, and painted corridor, is nearly gone. The true ruin appears, and the principal personalities of the natural contest over property. It is singular that when that all-haunting ghost, Elizabeth, was the 'most high mightie and magnificent Empresse,' gilding our drowsy countryside with her progress of 1578, the owner here chose to entertain her eye with a sculpture, representing

a broad-nosed, hairy, leaf-clad man of the woods, armed with a club. This effigy stood his ground until the nineteenth century, and was then removed; but his phantasmal prototype has persisted. The wooden club has been wielded, and the shaggy outlawry has fastened on the place. Winter, with bitter candour, shows the grasp and muscle of the monster.

No devil-fish ever cast his tentacles round a fisherman as these brown trees, now distinct and numbered, have lashed their roots round the brick and stone bases, or driven them through and in and out in a cold passion. Here, they have thrust the masonry aside, and blocked the moat; there, they have balanced it to suit their purpose, and will not be divided from it in their death. The moat, that once reflected gay costumes, now shines with the tints of their lost leaves, except where the still rich red of the wall is mirrored.

An empty wren's nest under these iron-sinewed roots, a flapping pigeon, a moorhen lying low – these give some tenderness to what is a battlefield. Even battlefields have room for homes.

Winter in the country increases the intimacies. Go to the market-towns on a hot summer's day, and the bricks and pavements ignore you. The colours of the shop-windows, the qualities and allurements of their contents, have only the interest of necessity. You wish to be cool, for example – it is a negative sort of ambition, and does not produce a variety of ideas or a lingering joy in the achieving. But, with winter, there is a sprightliness in the visit to the market and in the business – no, the recreation – of making the round of the shops. The hunt is up. The labourers who are out among the root-crops seem doubly unfortunate, while you spin along to the now beckoning roofs of the town. You pass even the barracks and

wood-yards with a heartiness, and when the lamps are lighted and the faces of shopkeepers and customers are seen everywhere, the huge night overhead is forgotten. You hear louder voices, you see more inns in winter. Solidity of clothes, provisions, and hand-shakes surround you, and simplifies trouble in evidencing the worth of humanity. You cast longing eyes on corduroy jackets, or sides of bacon, and are pleased that the homeward bus is crammed with your fellow-beings and their bundles.

Those windless valleys where it is always lawn-tennis weather, the property of the idyllic poets, ought really to be provided with a winter quarter. I should not object violently to posthumous residence among their serene blossoms, with a view of Ventnor or the Inland Sea under the best arrangements. But I should ask for more. A driving rain, a flickering light along the puddled street, a sound of bells on the gust, the church windows gleaming, and the inner jubilation of the organ – let us have that luxury. The empty ploughlands drowned in howling night – and the chairs drawn round the fire – who would resign that? No deathless service of watermelons and zephyrs will do instead:

*O ! when the growling winds contend, and all  
The sounding forest fluctuates in the storm,  
To sink in warm repose, and hear the din  
Howl o'er the steady battlements, delights  
Above the luxury of vulgar sleep.*

Standing on that shattered rampart just now, I thought of other ramparts, and winters which can never be excelled for accumulated ferocity. Those who would find the antipodes to all pleasures in pains may picture the soldier dragging his swollen feet through the

a broad-nosed, hairy, leaf-clad man of the woods, armed with a club. This effigy stood his ground until the nineteenth century, and was then removed; but his phantasmal prototype has persisted. The wooden club has been wielded, and the shaggy outlawry has fastened on the place. Winter, with bitter candour, shows the grasp and muscle of the monster.

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slush, past the last ruin, with its last emblem, the hearth, sodden with sleet or rain, into a houseless place of ordeal. 'For them no more the blazing hearth shall burn,' unless they are extremely lucky. The Convent cellars in Ypres, in the winter of 1916, witnessed some courageous comradeship, defying winter and war in an atmosphere of woodsmoke. The slime of the winter after that was powerless to stop the survivors from making their way to the market-town, in the old spirit, at the first opportunity. The winter after that, with its sudden dislocating relaxation of the strain, found us still making believe that by such journeys we were winning the homeliness and life of former times, although the white wine was by this time mere acid, and the bars of soap which stood in the dreary, splashed windows of prostituted towns were scarcely festive, or a cure for rheumatism.

The pale light of a mild winter afternoon, which touches a forlorn scene so aptly in its true condition, has rested on many ruins, and identified us with them in a strange degree. It may be merely fancy, or an accident of associations; but I would trace a relation between this spirit, rather than light, and the decline of places. In this sympathetic crystal, so transient, I look at this grove that was a house, and naturally find the scene transformed into far-off wounded towers, and ramparts, and colonnades of trees, and red loopholed roofs, standing alone among unpeopled marshy plains, towards the winter evening of their friendly and intimate lives.

From *The Face of England* (1932)

## XVI

W. B. YEATS

### SHELLEY'S POETRY

THE most important, the most precise of all Shelley's symbols, the one he uses with the fullest knowledge of its meaning, is the Morning and Evening Star. It rises and sets for ever over the towers and rivers, and is the throne of his genius. Personified as a woman it leads Rousseau, the typical poet of *The Triumph of Life*, under the power of the destroying hunger of life, under the power of the sun that we shall find presently as a symbol of life, and it is the Morning Star that wars against the principle of evil in *Laon and Cythna*, at first as a star with a red comet, here a symbol of all evil as it is of disorder in *Epipsychedion*, and then as a serpent with an eagle — symbols in Blake too and in the Alchemists; and it is the Morning Star that appears as a winged youth to a woman, who typifies humanity amid its sorrows, in the first canto of *Laon and Cythna*; and it is invoked by the wailing women of *Hellas*, who call it 'lamp of the free' and 'beacon of love' and would go where it hides flying from the deepening night among those 'kingless continents sinless as Eden,' and 'mountains and islands' 'prankt on the sapphire sea' that are but the opposing hemispheres to the senses, but, as I think, the ideal world, the world of the dead, to the imagination; and in the *Ode to Liberty*, Liberty is bid lead wisdom out of the inmost cave of man's mind as the Morning Star leads the sun out of the waves.

We know too that had *Prince Athanase* been finished it would have described the finding of Pandemus, the stars' lower genius, and the growing weary of her, and the coming to its true genius Urania at the coming of death, as the day finds the Star at evening. There is hardly indeed a poem of any length in which one does not find it as a symbol of love, or liberty, or wisdom, or beauty, or of some other expression of that Intellectual Beauty, which was to Shelley's mind the central power of the world; and to its faint and fleeting light he offers up all desires, that are as

*The desire of the moth for the star,  
Of the night for the morrow,  
The devotion to something afar  
From the sphere of our sorrow.*

When its genius comes to Rousseau, shedding dew with one hand, and treading out the stars with her feet, for she is also the genius of the dawn, she brings him a cup full of oblivion and love. He drinks and his mind becomes like sand 'on desert Labrador' marked by the feet of deer and a wolf. And then the new vision, life, the cold light of day moves before him, and the first vision becomes an invisible presence. The same image was in his mind too when he wrote

*Hesperus flies from awakening night  
And pants in its beauty and speed with light,  
Fast fleeting, soft and bright.*

Though I do not think that Shelley needed to go to Porphyry's account of the cold intoxicating cup, given to the souls in the constellation of the Cup near the constellation Cancer, for so obvious a symbol as the cup, or that he could not have found the wolf and the deer and the continual flight of his Star in his own

mind, his poetry becomes the richer, the more emotional, and loses something of its appearance of idle phantasy when I remember that these are ancient symbols, and still come to visionaries in their dreams. Because the wolf is but a more violent symbol of longing and desire than the hound, his wolf and deer remind me of the hound and deer that Usheen saw in the Gaelic poem chasing one another on the water before he saw the young man following the woman with the golden apple; and of a Galway tale that tells how Niam, whose name means brightness or beauty, came to Usheen as a deer; and of a vision that a friend of mine saw when gazing at a dark-blue curtain. I was with a number of Hermetists, and one of them said to another, 'Do you see something in the curtain?' The other gazed at the curtain for a while and saw presently a man led through a wood by a black hound, and then the hound lay dead at a place the seer knew was called, without knowing why, 'the Meeting of the Suns,' and the man followed a red hound, and then the red hound was pierced by a spear. A white fawn watched the man out of the wood, but he did not look at it, for a white hound came and he followed it trembling, but the seer knew that he would follow the fawn at last, and that it would lead him among the gods. The most learned of the Hermetists said, 'I cannot tell the meaning of the hounds or where the Meeting of the Suns is, but I think the fawn is the Morning and Evening Star.' I have little doubt that when the man saw the white fawn he was coming out of the darkness and passion of the world into some day of partial regeneration, and that it was the Morning Star and would be the Evening Star at its second coming. I have little doubt that it was but the story of Prince Athanase and what may have been the story of Rousseau in *The Triumph of Life*,

thrown outward once again from that great memory, which is still the mother of the Muses, though men no longer believe in it.

It may have been this memory, or it may have been some impulse of his nature too subtle for his mind to follow, that made Keats, with his love of embodied things, of precision of form and colouring, of emotions made sleepy by the flesh, see Intellectual Beauty in the Moon; and Blake, who lived in that energy he called eternal delight, see it in the Sun, where his personification of poetic genius labours at a furnace. I think there was certainly some reason why these men took so deep a pleasure in lights that Shelley thought of with weariness and trouble. The Moon is the most changeable of symbols, and not merely because it is the symbol of change. As mistress of the waters she governs the life of instinct and the generation of things, for, as Porphyry says, even 'the apparition of images' in the 'imagination' is through 'an excess of moisture'; and, as a cold and changeable fire set in the bare heavens, she governs alike chastity and the joyless idle drifting hither and thither of generated things. She may give God a body and have Gabriel to bear her messages, or she may come to men in their happy moments as she came to Endymion, or she may deny life and shoot her arrows; but because she only becomes beautiful in giving herself, and is no flying ideal, she is not loved by the children of desire.

Shelley could not help but see her with unfriendly eyes. He is believed to have described Mary Shelley at a time when she had come to seem cold in his eyes, in that passage of *Epipsychedion* which tells how a woman like the Moon led him to her cave and made 'frost' creep over the sea of his mind, and so bewitched Life and Death with 'her silver voice' that they ran from

him crying, 'Away, he is not of our crew.' When he describes the Moon as part of some beautiful scene he can call her beautiful, but when he personifies, when his words come under the influence of that great memory or of some mysterious tide in the depth of our being, he grows unfriendly or not truly friendly or at the most pitiful. The Moon's lips 'are pale and wan-ing,' it is 'the cold Moon,' or 'the frozen and inconstant Moon,' or it is 'forgotten' and 'waning,' or it 'wanders' and is 'weary,' or it is 'pale and grey,' or it is 'pale for weariness,' and 'wandering companionless' and 'ever changing,' and finding 'no object worth' its 'constancy,' or it is like a 'dying lady' who 'totters' 'out of her chamber led by the insane and feeble wanderings of her fading brain,' and even when it is no more than a star, it casts an evil influence that makes the lips of lovers 'lurid' or pale. It only becomes a thing of delight when Time is being borne to his tomb in eternity, for then the spirit of the Earth, man's procreant mind, fills it with his own joyousness. He describes the spirit of the Earth and of the Moon, moving above the rivulet of their lives, in a passage which reads like a half-understood vision. Man has become 'one harmonious soul of many a soul' and 'all things flow to all' and 'familiar acts are beautiful through love,' and an 'ani-mation of delight' at this change flows from spirit to spirit till the snow 'is loosened from the Moon's lifeless mountains.'

Some old magical writer, I forget who, says if you wish to be melancholy hold in your left hand an image of the Moon made out of silver, and if you wish to be happy hold in your right hand an image of the Sun made out of gold. The Sun is the symbol of sensitive life, and of belief and joy and pride and energy, of indeed the whole life of the will, and of that beauty which

neither lures from far off, nor becomes beautiful in giving itself, but makes all glad because it is beauty. Taylor quotes Proclus as calling it 'the Demiurgos of everything sensible.' It was therefore natural that Blake, who was always praising energy, and all exalted overflowing of oneself, and who thought art an impassioned labour to keep men from doubt and despondency, and woman's love an evil, when it would trammel man's will, should see the poetic genius not in a woman star but in the Sun, and should rejoice throughout his poetry in 'the Sun in his strength.' Shelley, however, except when he uses it to describe the peculiar beauty of Emilia Viviani, who was 'like an incarnation of the Sun when light is changed to love,' saw it with less friendly eyes. He seems to have seen it with perfect happiness only when veiled in mist, or glimmering upon water, or when faint enough to do no more than veil the brightness of his own Star; and in *The Triumph of Life*, the one poem in which it is part of the avowed symbolism, its power is the being and the source of all tyrannies. When the woman personifying the Morning Star has faded from before his eyes, Rousseau sees a 'new vision' in 'a cold bright car' with a rainbow hovering over her, and as she comes the shadow passes from 'leaf and stone' and the souls she has enslaved seem in 'that light like atomies to dance within a sunbeam,' or they dance among the flowers that grow up newly 'in the grassy verdure of the desert,' unmindful of the misery that is to come upon them. 'These are the great, the unforgotten,' all who have worn 'mitres and helms and crowns or wreaths of light,' and yet have not known themselves. Even 'great Plato' is there, because he knew joy and sorrow, because life that could not subdue him by gold or pain, by 'age or sloth or slavery,' subdued him by love. All who have ever lived

are there except Christ and Socrates and the 'sacred few' who put away all life could give, being doubtless followers throughout their lives of the forms borne by the flying ideal, or who, 'as soon as they had touched the world with living flame, flew back like eagles to their native noon.'

In ancient times, it seems to me that Blake, who for all his protest was glad to be alive, and ever spoke of his gladness, would have worshipped in some chapel of the Sun, but that Shelley, who hated life because he sought 'more in life than any understood,' would have wandered, lost in a ceaseless reverie, in some chapel of the Star of infinite desire.

I think too that as he knelt before an altar, where a thin flame burnt in a lamp made of green agate, a single vision would have come to him again and again, a vision of a boat drifting down a broad river between high hills where there were caves and towers, and following the light of one Star; and that voices would have told him how there is for every man some one scene, some one adventure, some one picture that is the image of his secret life, for wisdom first speaks in images, and that this one image, if he would but brood over it his life long, would lead his soul, disentangled from unmeaning circumstance and the ebb and flow of the world, into that far household, where the undying gods await all whose souls have become simple as flame, whose bodies have become quiet as an agate lamp.

But he was born in a day when the old wisdom had vanished and was content merely to write verses, and often with little thought of more than verses.

(Written 1900.)

From *Essays* (1924)

XVII

HILAIRE BELLOC

THE ROMAN ROAD

THE other day (it was Wednesday, and the air was very pure) I went into the stable upon my way towards the wood, and there I saw my horse Monster standing by himself, regarding nothingness. And when I had considered what a shame it was to take one's pleasure in a wood and leave one's helpless horse at home, I bridled him and saddled him and took him out, and rode him the way that I had meant to go alone. So we went together along the Stene under the North Wood until we got to the edge of the forest, and then we took the green Ride to the right, for it was my intention to go and look at the Roman road.

Behind my house, behind my little farm, there are as many miles of turf as one cares to count, and then behind it also, but the other way, there goes this deep and lonely forest. It is principally of beech, which is the tree of the chalk, and no one has cut it or fenced it or thought about it (except to love it), since the parts about my village took their names: Gumber and Fairmile Bay Combe, the Nore, and the stretch called No Man's Land.

Into the darkness of these trees I rode very quietly with Monster, my horse, but whether the autumn air were pleasanter to him or to me neither of us could decide, for there is no bridge between two souls. That is, if horses have a soul, which I suppose they have, for

they are both stupid and kindly, and they fear death as though a part, and but a part, of them were immortal. Also they see things in the dark and are cognizant of evil.

When I had gone some hundred yards towards the Roman road I saw, bending lower than the rest on the tree from which it hung, a golden bough, and I said to myself that I had had good luck, for such a thing has always been the sign of an unusual experience and of a voyage among the dead. All the other leaves of the tree were green, but the turn of the year, which sends out foragers just as the spring does, marking the way it is to go, had come and touched this bough and changed it, so that it shone out by itself in the recesses of the forest and gleamed before and behind. I did not ask what way it led me, for I knew; and so I went onwards, riding my horse, until I came to that long bank of earth which runs like a sort of challenge through this ancient land to prove what our origins were, and who first brought us merry people into the circuit of the world.

When I saw the Roman road the sharper influence which it had had upon my boyhood returned to me, and I got off my horse and took his bit out of his mouth so that he could play the fool with the grass and leaves (which are bad for him), and I hitched the snaffle to a little broken peg of bough so that he could not wander. And then I looked up and down along the boles of the great North Wood, taking in the straight line of the way.

I have heard it said that certain professors, the most learned of their day, did once deny that this was a Roman road. I can well believe it, and it is delightful to believe that they did. For this road startles and controls a true man, presenting an eternal

example of what Rome could do. The peasants around have always called it the 'Street.' It leads from what was certainly one Roman town to what was certainly another. That sign of Roman occupation, the modern word 'Cold Harbour,' is scattered up and down it. There are Roman pavements on it. It goes plumb straight for miles, and at times, wherever it crosses undisturbed land, it is three or four feet above the level of the down. Here, then, was a feast for the learned: since certainly the more obvious a thing is, the more glory there must be in denying it. And deny it they did (or at least, so I am told), just as they will deny that Thomas à Becket was a Papist, or that Austerlitz was fought in spite of Trafalgar, or that the Gospel of St. John is the Gospel of St. John.

Here, then, sitting upon this Roman road I considered the nature of such men, and when I had thought out carefully where the nearest Don might be at that moment, I decided that he was at least twenty-three miles away, and I was very glad: for it permitted me to contemplate the road with common sense and with Faith, which is Common Sense transfigured; and I could see the Legionaries climbing the hill. I remembered also what a sight there was upon the down above, and I got upon my horse again to go and see it.

When one has pushed one's way through the brambles and the rounded great roots which have grown upon this street — where no man has walked perhaps for about a thousand years — one gets to the place where it tops the hill, and here one sees the way in which the line of it was first struck out. From where one stands, right away like a beam, leading from rise to rise, it runs to the cathedral town. You see the spot where it enters the eastern gate of the Roman walls;

you see at the end of it, like the dot upon an 'i,' the mass of the cathedral. Then, if you turn and look northward, you see from point to point its taut stretch across the weald to where, at the very limit of the horizon, there is a gap in the chain of hills that bars your view.

The strict design of such a thing weighs upon one as might weigh upon one four great lines of Virgil, or the sight of those enormous stones which one comes upon, Roman also, in the Algerian sands. The plan of such an avenue by which to lead great armies and along which to drive commands argues a mixture of unity and of power as intimate as the lime and the sand of which these conquerors welded their imperishable cement. And it does more than this. It suggests swiftness and certitude of aim and a sort of eager determination which we are slow to connect with government, but which certainly underlay the triumph of this people. A road will give one less trouble if it winds about and feels the contours of the land. It will pay better if it is of earth and broken stones instead of being paved, nor would anyone aiming at wealth or comfort alone laboriously raise its level, as the level of this road is raised. But in all that the Romans did there was something of a monument. Where they might have taken pipes down a valley and up the opposing side they preferred the broad shoulders of an arcade, and where a seven-foot door would have done well enough to enter their houses by they were content with nothing less than an arch of fifty. In all their work they were conscious of some business other than that immediately to hand, and therefore it is possible that their ruins will survive the establishment of our own time as they have survived that of the Middle Ages. In this wild place, at least, nothing remained of all that was done between their time and ours.

These things did the sight on either side of the summit suggest to me, but chiefly there returned as I gazed the delicious thought that learned men, laborious and heavily endowed, had denied the *existence* of this Roman road.

See with what manifold uses every accident of human life is crammed ! Here was a piece of pedantry and scepticism, which might make some men weep and some men stamp with irritation, and some men, from sheer boredom, fall asleep, but which fed in my own spirit a fountain of pure joy, as I considered carefully what kind of man it is who denies these things; the kind of way he walks; the kind of face he has; the kind of book he writes; the kind of publisher who chisels him; and the kind of way in which his works are bound. With every moment my elation grew greater and more impetuous, until at last I could not bear to sit any longer still, even upon so admirable a beast, nor to look down even at so rich a plain (though that was seen through the air of Southern England), but turning over the downs I galloped home, and came in straight from the turf to my own ground – for what man would live upon a high road who could go through a gate right off the turf to his own steading and let the world go hang ?

And so did I. But as they brought me beer and bacon at evening, and I toasted the memory of things past, I said to myself: 'Oxford, Cambridge, Dublin, Durham – you four great universities – you terrors of Europe – that road is older than you: and meanwhile I drink to your continued healths, but let us have a little room . . . air, there, give us air, good people. I stifle when I think of you.'

From *Hills and the Sea* (1906)

## XVIII

IVOR BROWN

### A SENTIMENTAL JOURNEY

A QUARTER of a century is a phrase with an epochal ring and these last five and twenty years have altered the world more than most. Empires have waxed and waned; motor-cars have altered the whole face of travel and the whole scale of British distances; a penny has become a halfpenny and the char-à-banc has crashed its way through the silent austerities of the Scottish Sabbath. But much of Scotland stands exactly where it did. Here in the north-east, whither I have made my sentimental journey, the land and sea yield the old harvests of grain and herring. The plough that has not altered since Homer told its shape and motion is not to suffer change while a boy grows up. The sea shows more of steam and less of sail, but evolution has obliged Tennessee by signally failing to leave new marks on herring and haddock, rabbit and hare. Had I been a London boy, I could hardly go in search of my youth. For the horses of the green Atlas bus that took me to Lord's have vanished and no more is the effortless beauty of J. T. Hearne's bowling to be observed. But here I can go to 'the games' last visited in 1900 and they will be held in the same 'haugh'; the same dancing-master will sit on the judgment bench to nod gravely at the same flings and sword-dances. The pipes will be mournful and brisk with the same airs

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and tea-time will bring the same neat bag of cakes. True, the programme hinted at the presence of the Abertochty 'jazz band.' But what's in a name? As of old there were fiddlers three.

The conditions, as they say, are eminently suitable. Here one may indeed go in search of one's youth and reconstruct in the tranquillity of a sunny afternoon the emotions of a very small boy. Of course it is all much smaller than one's memory. A mile has dwindled to a furlong, a forest to a copse, a torrent to a trickle. The trout that were Tritons are now to be seen as flickering minnows in the shallows under the bridge. A mountain has shrunk to a hillock. It doesn't do, this retracing of boyhood's steps. One knew, of course, that looking backward is like looking through an opera-glass reversed. But the distortion is worse than one imagined. One shouldn't have gone. The return has been a cowardly assault upon romance, a butchering of innocent memories. Far better have left the old house to be, in mind's eye, grandiose, mysterious, abounding in dark possibilities; in short, the half-menacing, half-entrancing monster that it used to be. Far better have left to the gardens their flattering spaciousness of boyhood's vision, to the wood its pristine mystery of cavernous and black allure.

But one has done the deed. There it all lies, plain-set in smiling sunlight, a diminished paradise. It is just a piece of eastern Scotland, that frank and self-explanatory countryside which rolls an open bosom to the plain straightforward sea. No Celtic twilights, tortuous lochs, and peaks that stab the mist are here to make adult reason concede a tremor to romance. Good farming trims the landscape; grey, orderly walls keep watch over pasture, roots, and oats. Here

and there the rising ground soars out of man's control and green fields admit their limitations and march peaceably with heather. Here the hillside turns to fir plantation, there to empty purple acres. But the wildness, the strangeness, the beckoning immensities of those old days have shrivelled and departed. Boyhood was too small for Ordnance maps and the withering accuracies of the measuring-rod. It made its own mileage, forged its own contours, made and named and ruled its mountain range. Compute it now coldly at 'one inch to mile' and a kingdom turns to a crofter's holding. Yet within this nutshell moved a king of infinite space. Perhaps not king; a princeling were more accurate.

The owls have gone from the quivering pine-wood; no heron flaps its pondering course along the burn. The coneys we have always with us, and their tribe at least is slow to dwindle. The gamekeeper has gone from the lodge, and he who knew the haunts of beast and bird now peddles bull's-eyes and half-pounds of tea. He is an injured man. Somebody started a war, and there has been no need for small estates since then. A nice range of red deer, grouse, and salmon will fetch a doubled price from merchant princes, for we are not all paupers at holiday-time. But the solid 'mixed shooting' with nothing showy about it and a four-square chunk of masonry to maintain attracts no bidders now. The lawns grow weeds, and the gamekeeper digs potatoes until the shop bell rings, and then he must weigh out another quarter of sweeties. He knows it is all wrong, but he says very little. He never goes near the house from which he has been driven. For relaxation he has his parlour, and there he sits with all the immobility of the soil-bound peasant looking at nothing, unless it is the past.

'You'll notice the sea has worked in a lot,' he says. 'It's beating the land by a yard a year. It'll tak' a' the links. There's changes everywhere.'

Yet was this visitation altogether a blundering folly? Has the sentimental journey proved altogether a wanton outrage upon sentiment? No; it has its powers of reassurance, its compensations, and its fair suggestions. The woods have lost their wonder, and their darkness is a plain, unghosted thing. But beauty has crept in. Boyhood never saw that. Boyhood never knew the exquisite proportion of this countryside in which the elements of sea, moor, tilth, pasture, and copse have been dispensed as though by some inspired chemist of landscape. The place does yield its reparations and pays them in the currency of the eye's delight. How fitly the house lifts up its native stone, grey, unassuming, comfortably set! How lightly the bridge jumps the burn and leads to the village and the mellow-gardened manse. The sense of a desert has departed and the sense of a civilization has come in. If one no longer looks for eagles in the skies or marauders in the glades, one can look for shapeliness in homes and handsomeness in everything. And it is a handsome country garnished by diligence and fruitful under discipline. The grey-beard who comes down from his farm to judge the piping and dancing at the village games will not whine to you about bad times. He has the measure of the soil and of his agrarian competitors; he has whipped his land into a clean prosperity, and his cattle are known and feared at the Royal Northern Show. His sons have gone to the university, but he is just a little doubtful about the teaching at the village academy. They want a better man, and, from the sound of his voice, they mean to get one. To judge the pibrochs is the limit of his surrender to Gaelic

dreaming. His youngest boy is going to be as great a man of medicine as ever went south from Aberdeen. He goes on Sunday to the kirk, thinks little of the minister, and has no qualms.

It was once a land of giants, black-bearded men, who came up from the coastal fisheries and sometimes took a small boy in their boat to see the odd harvest of their nets. It was full of dark pools and distant heights, of birds and animals, of hopes and panics and surprises. It is not at all like that now. Boy Scouts encamp themselves where once was desolation. The burn trills equably through small and genial copses. The fields run up to the heather, and the heather, a mere mile of it, runs down again to the fields. But the view is gracious, and the air earns all the compliments that Shakespeare paid to the less deserving climate of sluggish Inverness. The land breeds pensive but not ungenial men whose philosophy has hard, clear lines. Boyhood turned honest farms into its land of fancy free, made every trout a salmon, and every cushat a capercailzie; other years see other things. It is not all loss.

All that has gone is quantity. Quality remains. No glory, save that of stature, has departed. Rather has glory increased. To go in search of one's youth is to have done with the nonsense preached with a sublime eloquence by Wordsworth in his ode on the Intimations of Immortality. To grow up in body is to grow up in spirit. The eye develops with the frame, appreciation with the spread of limb. The shades of the prison house with which the poet threatened adolescence are indeed the fiction of brain-sickly brooding. Take the village. What was it to a boy but the goal of a morning journey? There were lessons waiting in the study at the manse; there was toffee at the

village-shop. But now I can see that village and praise the wisdom that built it under the woods and above the burn, in as sweet a nook as Scotland can contain. I can praise the fitness of its shaping, and see that the houses of native stone have grown up like living things in perfect kinship with their landscape. The queer house that is half a fortress, the manse that is at once kindly and formal like a domesticated kirk, home of stern virtues and of gentle flowers and fruit, the twist and surge of the rambling street – all these were nothing then. They are much now. My boyhood, at least, had no vision splendid to surround its practical journeying. It thought of guns, fishing-rods, and sweetmeats. It breathed no larger air.

So there is good in growing up. The boy cannot see the wood for the trees, the burn for the lurking trout, the moor for the possible excitements of beast and bird. Now beauty comes in, life's compensation for adventure. The compensation outweighs the loss. The village takes its place in the scheme of things; it is the work of generations of living, labouring men. Its crannied walls have the flowers which you may search for the ultimate mysteries. But the walls need not drive you so far into the by-ways of reflection. They have their more obvious story and are the testament of the grey, orderly, but not ungenial culture of eastern Scotland. So, at the end of a sentimental journey, one may bask without regrets. Wonder has gone, but admiration remains. The meadow has lost its mystery but found its meaning, and takes its place in a scheme of things far beyond the scope and range of childish mind. The black wood that housed Jack Redskin no longer enfolds imaginary denizens. Does it matter? It is beautiful now as well as black. The house in which I gladly lived has become the house at which

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I gladly look. It is a generous exchange. It is indeed worth while to go in search of one's youth. That is dead and may not be discovered. But all the things that boyhood missed, how excellent they are !

From *Masques and Phases* (1926)

## XIX

### LEADERS FROM *THE TIMES*

#### (a) A FIRST LEADER

#### GENEVA - LAUSANNE - OTTAWA

EMPIRE DAY this year finds the British nations anxiously awaiting the outcome of three great Conferences. All three in their different ways are of vital importance for the future of the Empire. Two of them are international and the Empire Governments can therefore only influence — they cannot determine — the results. The third is a family council, and for its success or failure they will have the sole responsibility. The Disarmament Conference now in being, though hardly in progress, at Geneva has been marking time ever since the resolution declaring that certain classes or descriptions of weapons should either be prohibited or placed under international control was unanimously passed by the General Committee over a month ago. In the interval there has been a General Election in France, and until the new French Government has been formed the Conference will be hampered in resuming the work which had begun with so much promise. It is not only time which is being lost by the delay. There has also been a certain evaporation of the hopes which had been aroused by the resolution of the General Committee and still more by the speeches made in that Committee. The reports of the wearisome, and so far sterile, discussions in the Technical Committees as to what classes of arms should be

banned or controlled have naturally had a depressing effect, especially since so many previous Conferences to solve international problems have come to a fruitless end. But it is too early yet to give way to pessimism. To abandon hope of an agreement at Geneva would be virtually to give up hope of reversing the present drift towards economic stagnation. In this respect Geneva is as important as Lausanne. Trade will not revive without confidence; confidence will not be restored until the existing political tension is relieved; and there can be no prospect of relieving that tension until there is an agreement regulating armaments on principles accepted by all and applicable to all countries alike. The armed forces of different Powers must naturally differ in number and in fighting strength to meet their different responsibilities; but there can be no real peace, and therefore no return to prosperity, so long as one nation is kept on an inferior footing to the others and forbidden the possession of weapons which they are allowed to retain.

There is no need in these days of unbalanced Budgets to emphasize the necessity of easing the financial burden caused by the monstrous growth of armaments, or to dwell on the fact that competitive armaments are themselves a menace to the security which they are intended to safeguard. What is not so generally realized is that a substantial step towards disarmament is a necessary condition for a settlement of those inter-Governmental debts which are paralysing international trade. A final debt settlement can only be reached with the co-operation of the United States, and no one acquainted with American feeling and opinion can expect this co-operation so long as the debtor nations continue to spend huge sums on what Americans regard as unnecessary and provocative

armaments. Mr. Borah undoubtedly spoke for the great mass of his countrymen when he said that the American taxpayer would refuse to consider any concession over debts until assured that it would bring about a real improvement in world economic conditions, and when he went on to maintain that no such improvement could be expected without disarmament and without an equitable and final settlement of the reparations question. As things are the United States Government expect their European debtors to resume payment after July 1; and it is understood that in fact the British Government are now arranging to repay to the United States, in addition to the former annuities, a further annual sum to make up for the suspension of payments during the 'Hoover year.' America is certain to stand on the letter of the bond until her debtors have themselves done all that lies in their power to get rid of the obstacles to economic recovery. The Geneva Conference on disarmament and the Lausanne Conference on reparations offer the necessary opportunity, and they must both be made to yield effective agreement if the threatened economic collapse is to be averted. The danger of such a collapse is now generally recognized, and it is also recognized that no country will escape the effects, though some may suffer sooner and more severely than others. The Lausanne Conference meets next month and the Geneva Conference may be expected to resume its work about the same time. Vital decisions cannot be postponed much longer, for any further postponement will in itself be equivalent to the most unfortunate decision of all - to let things drift. The occasion calls for foresight and circumspection, but even more for bold and determined leadership. It should not be impossible to devise plans for disarmament which

should remove the sense of injustice which is rankling in Germany without endangering the security of France and her allies. Nor should it be impossible to work out a scheme for a settlement of reparation liabilities – perhaps by the offer and acceptance of a lump sum in final discharge – which would meet the equitable demands of France for compensation while giving Germany the relief she needs and ridding international politics of an irritant sore.

If even a moderate degree of success is achieved at Geneva and Lausanne it will restore confidence in the future, and the wheels of international commerce will start moving again. With the revival of trade the prices of commodities will rise, easing the burden of indebtedness now oppressing the primary producing countries; they will be able to buy more freely from the manufacturing countries, and there will be an accelerating improvement in economic conditions throughout the world. At the Ottawa Conference the Empire Governments will have an unexampled opportunity to ensure that all the countries of the Empire shall participate in the upward movement and reap their full share of benefit from it. But neither the Geneva nor the Lausanne Conference will succeed unless the Governments taking part in them display a capacity, of which they have hitherto given little indication, to take the long and the broad view of national interests, and unless the very urgency of the occasion calls forth that real leadership which has been lacking to the great weakness of recent Conferences. While hoping and working for success, it is only prudent to be prepared for failure, to be prepared, that is, to face the consequences of a bankruptcy of the statesmanship of modern democracies. The world will then almost certainly have to go through further and sharper tribulation –

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political, economic, and social – before it establishes new equilibriums and settles down to new and worse conditions. In that event it will be for the Ottawa Conference to concert measures which will secure for the quarter of the world under the British flag the means to maintain and even to increase its production and its trade in spite of the breakdown of the machinery of international commerce. The task will not be easy. The problems to be solved are almost as complicated as those which will engage the Lausanne Conference. But Ottawa has this advantage over Lausanne, that the Governments participating and the countries they represent are united by a common allegiance and a common tradition, and are accustomed to work together for the common benefit of the whole Empire. They have now to lay the foundations for a system of mutual help which will enable them to withstand the worst shocks following from a possible failure at Lausanne. In the last public speech over a hundred years ago Pitt made the proud boast that 'England has saved herself by her exertions, and will, as I trust, save Europe by her example.' After the Ottawa Conference the Empire Governments must be able to claim with equal confidence that the British Empire has saved itself by its exertions, and will, by its example, save the world.

(May 24, 1932)

## (b) THIRD LEADERS

## (i) HOT BOTTLES

'I wish him joy,' says the song, 'wherever he dwell, who first found out the Leather Bottèl.' There is no disputing the title of this anonymous hero, who enabled so great an advance in the technique of drinking, to the reverent gratitude of posterity. Yet thanks as ardent are surely due to the inventor, not less obscure and assuredly not less beneficent, of the hot-water bottle; nor will they be withheld as winter approaches by any but those jaundiced stoics who decline its solace. Many take to this bottle which 'cheers but not inebriates,' than which there never was a purveyor of comfort more unpretentious, more inexpensive, more innocently seductive.

In its absence (due, it may be, to principle, but more probably to accident) who has not stood before his bed like a diver by an icy flood into which he must perforce plunge, eyeing the frosty sheets with shrinking and repugnance? And how willingly, by contrast, nay, how eagerly that plunge is made by one who descries under the coverlet the faint but fateful convexity which denotes its presence! For he knows that beneath the forbidding surface lies ambushed a genial midnight sun, lightless, indeed, but insinuatingly calorific – a mobile reserve of bottled firelight, which can be shifted from point to point, driving before it from pillar to post the demons of chill until they can find no lodgment anywhere. Nor is it these demons alone who yield to the mounting flood of physical well-being, but all their allies and hangers-on. Half the crabbed humours, the biting discontents, and the atrabilious fancies of

mankind follow where once cold has forced an entrance, and vanish with its eviction.

The proportion of human acts or omissions which are determined by the state of the agent's circulation is not fully appreciated. The surface temperature of the body (for the inward warmth would seem to vary little, except when we 'have a temperature') is a most powerful determinant of human conduct. The calorific has at least equal claims to acceptance with the economic interpretation of history. Men with chronically warm hands and feet do not commit suicide. The 'four o'clock in the morning courage,' which is so rare and so enviable, comes easily to them. Their thoughts are not distracted by the pinch of chill from the business which they have in hand. Their affections are not estranged from their friends by that preoccupation with self which physical malaise, however caused, inevitably engenders. Such are the blessings of a good natural circulation. If we possess it not, where are we to turn for a substitute?

There is, of course, wine, which will procure all these blessings for a time and at a price. But, as Bentham insists, pleasures must be weighed by reference not only to their intensity but to their duration. The mercury in the hedonometer may rise far above normal as the result of wine; but it will not maintain itself there. After too short an interval follows the inevitable compensating sag. This is the more intelligible if, as some scientists assert, alcohol actually lowers the average temperature of the body, creating its effect of peripheral warmth merely by diverting the blood from centre to the surface. However this may be, the effects of the hot bottle - less intense, and it must be owned less stimulating to the imagination - are far more enduring. Nor have its worst enemies

suggested that it produces any morbid physical aftermath.

Its glories are unsung. It has been celebrated by no sacred bard. It has barely insinuated its way into a modern realistic novel. The warming-pan has enjoyed far more literary publicity, as readers of *Pickwick* are unlikely to forget. Yet the warming-pan is a clumsy instrument. Before the sleeper enters the bed it must be extruded, leaving behind, not the abiding substance of warmth, but its fading echo. Even the primitive cylinders (still encountered now and then) of stone or metal are to be preferred to it. They at least pernoctate with us, continue their angular ministrations to the small hours, and seldom if ever leak. But when all has been said (and there is something to be said against him on the score of leaking) what can compare with the plain rectangle of rubber, jackedeted as a rule in post-office red, securely stoppered and not too full ?

## (ii) THE NEW DIARY

Whoever starts a new diary does it, if he is a wise man, in secret, for, if it be known to his friends that he keeps a punctual record of his doings and theirs, they will treat him with a reticence that may embarrass him. 'But,' the diarist will say, 'who need have fear of me? I have not an ear at the political keyholes. I do not enjoy what Pepys called "very high company." No secrets of State, you may be sure, will find their way into my humble pages.' This may be true, but the humblest diary is a weapon, a bomb with an inexhaustible time-fuse which may explode uncomfortably in anyone's grave. After all, what we most fear to have told of us is the proper subject of a good

private diary – not our public acts or even the secret schemes which underlie them, but the little weaknesses and follies and ambitions which are tolerable in the light traffic of every day, but of which we should be heartily ashamed if they, and they only, represented us to posterity. Lady Castlemaine, we may be certain, though she would not care much for all the hard things that historians and moralists have said of her relationship with King Charles, would blush for that fragment of Pepys which tells how she suddenly called for a patch from the face of one of her women, 'and wetted it and so clapped it on her own by the side of her mouth, I suppose she feeling a pimple rising there.'

Why she should resent that reference we cannot in reason tell; it reveals nothing to her discredit, only that she had – as we knew already – a lively sense of approaching misfortune. But resent it she would. If she had known that Pepys would write it down and that all the world, for generations to come, would read it and smirk over it, she would never have forgiven him, and certainly would have taken extraordinary care to guard her words and her actions from him in future. And once we know that a man keeps a diary and keeps it with an observant conscience, we treat him instinctively with the suspicion that would have been hers. Therefore, let the diarist be secret, lest the world, like a hedgehog, curl itself up at his approach.

This is the first rule of diary keeping. All others are more disputable. Should the diary be regular or irregular? Regular, we answer, to be on the safe side; yet there have been many good diaries with more gaps than entries. It is, in any case, a fatal practice to attempt regularity in amount – to aim, as some do, at filling a page or two pages a day. For the same

reasons it is foolish to strive for uniformity of style, or, indeed, for any style at all. The advantage of the diary-form is that it exempts its users from all the ordinary rules of the Press. You may spell as you like, abbreviate as you like, wander into side-tracks as and when it pleases you. Above all, you need preserve no sense of proportion or of responsibility. A new hat may oust a new Parliament; a new actress who amused you or an old one who did not may, without anyone's complaining here or hereafter, sweep all the armies and potentates of Europe over your margin into nothingness and oblivion. No subject which was begun need be continued; no one who becomes a bore need be allowed to linger on the page; no feelings – not even the diarist's own – need be considered; no sense of a critical audience need force gaiety from a mood of sadness or cast a shadow on the spirits of Puck.

Why, then, does not every one keep a diary if it is so full of the delights of freedom and omnipotence? Perhaps the reason is that we like to have an audience for what we say and grow a little tired of entertaining our great-great grandchildren. Some will have it that all diarists are vain. They seem, on the contrary, if they keep their secret and let no one pry into their locked drawer, to have an exceptional claim to be called modest. They may, of course, be puffing themselves up before the mirror of posterity, but that is so remote and pardonable a conceit – particularly if we remember that posterity is far more likely to mock than to admire – that no one who, while he turns over the blank pages of this year, wonders what other fingers will turn them some day, need be ashamed of his diarist's dream. Let him dip his industrious pen with courage, and snap his fingers at the sluggards

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who, if they guessed what he was about, would call him vain. Will the world care to know what such as he thought and did? Indeed it will in 200 years. And the humbler his estate, the more the world will be interested, for the records of the great are many, but the personal histories of the small and the mediocre are lamentably few. Pepys was a courtier and an Admiralty man; but what should we not give for the diaries, if they had been able to write them, of a few of his wife's housemaids, or for a day-to-day commentary by the boy whose ears he boxed?

From *Times Third Leaders* (1928)

## XX

### LYTTON STRACHEY

### CARLYLE

MY grandfather, Edward Strachey, an Anglo-Indian of cultivation and intelligence, once accompanied Carlyle on an excursion to Paris in pre-railroad days. At their destination the postilion asked my grandfather for a tip; but the reply – it is Carlyle who tells the story – was a curt refusal, followed by the words – ‘Vous avez drivé devilish slow.’ The reckless insularity of this remark illustrates well enough the extraordinary change which had come over the English governing classes since the eighteenth century. Fifty years earlier a cultivated Englishman would have piqued himself upon answering the postilion in the idiom and the accent of Paris. But the Napoleonic wars, the industrial revolution, the romantic revival, the Victorian spirit, had brought about a relapse from the cosmopolitan suavity of eighteenth-century culture; the centrifugal forces, always latent in English life, had triumphed, and men’s minds had shot off into the grooves of eccentricity and provincialism. It is curious to notice the flux and reflux of these tendencies in the history of our literature: the divine amenity of Chaucer followed by the no less divine idiosyncrasy of the Elizabethans; the exquisite vigour of the eighteenth century followed by the rampant vigour of the nineteenth; and to-day the return once more towards the Latin elements in

our culture, the revulsion from the Germanic influences which obsessed our grandfathers, the preference for what is swift, what is well arranged, and what is not too good.

Carlyle was not an English gentleman, he was a Scotch peasant; and his insularity may be measured accordingly – by a simple sum in proportion. In his youth, no doubt, he had German preoccupations; but on the whole he is, with Dickens, probably the most complete example of a home growth which the British Islands have to offer to the world. The result is certainly remarkable. There is much to be said for the isolated productions of special soils; they are full of strength and character; their freedom from outside forces releases in them a spring of energy which leads, often enough, to astonishing consequences. In Carlyle's case the release was terrific. His vitality burst out into an enormous exuberance, filling volume after volume with essays, histories, memoirs and philosophisings, pouring itself abroad through an immense correspondence, and erupting for eighty years in a perpetual flood of red-hot conversation. The achievements of such a spirit take one's breath away ; one gazes in awe at the serried row of heavy books on the shelf; one reads on and on until one's eyes are blinded by the endless glare of that aurora borealis, and one's ears deafened by the roar and rattle of that inexhaustible artillery. Then one recovers – very quickly. That is the drawback. The northern lights, after all, seem to give out no heat, and the great guns were only loaded with powder. So, at any rate, it appears to a perverse generation. It was all very well in the days when English gentlemen could say with perfect sang-froid 'Vous avez drivé devilish slow' to French postilions. Then the hurricane that was

Carlyle came into contact with what was exactly appropriate to it — gnarled oaks — solitary conifers; and the effect was sublime; leaves whirled, branches crashed, and fathers of the forest were uprooted. But nowadays it hurls itself upon a congregation of tremulous reeds; they bend down low, to the very earth, as the gale passes; and then immediately they spring up again, and are seen to be precisely as they were before.

The truth is that it is almost as fatal to have too much genius as too little. What was really valuable in Carlyle was ruined by his colossal powers and his unending energy. It is easy to perceive that, amid all the rest of his qualities, he was an artist. He had a profound relish for words; he had a sense of style which developed, gradually and consistently, into interesting and original manifestations; he had an imaginative eye; he had a grim satiric humour. This was an admirable outfit for a historian and a memoir writer, and it is safe to prophesy that whatever is permanent in Carlyle's work will be found in that section of his writings. But, unfortunately, the excellence, though it is undoubtedly there, is a fitful and fragmentary one. There are vivid flashes and phrases — visions thrown up out of the darkness of the past by the bull's-eye lantern of a stylistic imagination — Coleridge at Highgate, Maupertuis in Berlin, the grotesque image of the 'sea-green Incorruptible'; there are passages of accomplished caricature, and climaxes of elaborately characteristic writing; and then the artist's hand falters, his eye wanders, his mind is distracted and led away. One has only to compare Carlyle with Tacitus to realise what a disadvantage it is to possess unlimited powers. The Roman master, undisturbed by other considerations, was able to devote himself entirely to the creation of a work of art. He triumphed: supremely

conscious both of his capacities and his intentions, he built up a great design, which in all its parts was intense and beautiful. The Carlylean qualities – the satiric vision, the individual style – were his; but how differently he used them ! He composed a tragedy, while Carlyle spent himself in melodrama; he made his strange sentences the expression of a profound personality, while Carlyle's were the vehicle of violence and eccentricity.

The stern child of Ecclefechan held artists in low repute, and no doubt would have been disgusted to learn that it was in that guise that he would win the esteem of posterity. He had higher views: surely he would be remembered as a prophet. And no doubt he had many of the qualifications for that profession – a loud voice, a bold face, and a bad temper. But unfortunately there was one essential characteristic that he lacked – he was not dishonoured in his own country. Instead of being put into a pit and covered with opprobrium, he made a comfortable income, was supplied by Mrs. Carlyle with everything that he wanted, and was the favourite guest at Lady Ashburton's fashionable parties. Prophecies, in such circumstances, however voluminous and disagreeable they may be, are apt to have something wrong with them. And, in any case, who remembers prophets ? Isaiah and Jeremiah, no doubt, have gained a certain reputation; but then Isaiah and Jeremiah have had the extraordinary good fortune to be translated into English by a committee of Elizabethan bishops.

To be a prophet is to be a moralist, and it was the moral preoccupation in Carlyle's mind that was particularly injurious to his artistic instincts. In Latin countries – the fact is significant – morals and manners are expressed by the same word; in England

it is not so; to some Britons, indeed, the two notions appear to be positively antithetical. Perhaps this is a mistake. Perhaps if Carlyle's manners had been more polished his morals would have been less distressing. Morality, curiously enough, seems to belong to that class of things which are of the highest value, which perform a necessary function; which are, in fact, an essential part of the human mechanism, but which should only be referred to with the greatest circumspection. Carlyle had no notion that this was the case, and the result was disastrous. In his history, especially, it is impossible to escape from the devastating effects of his reckless moral sense.

Perhaps it is the platitude of such a state of mind that is its most exasperating quality. Surely, one thinks, poor Louis XV might be allowed to die without a sermon from Chelsea. But no! The opportunity must not be missed; the preacher draws a long breath, and expatiates with elaborate emphasis upon all that is most obvious about mortality, crowns, and the futility of self-indulgence. But an occasional platitude can be put up with; what is really intolerable is the all-pervadingness of the obsession. There are some German cooks who have a passion for caraway seeds: whatever dish they are preparing, from whipped cream to legs of mutton, they cannot keep them out. Very soon one begins to recognise the fatal flavour; one lies in horrified wait for it; it instantly appears; and at last the faintest suspicion of caraway almost produces nausea. The histories of Carlyle (and no less, it may be observed in passing, the novels of Thackeray) arouse those identical sensations – the immediate recognition of the first approaches of the well-known whiff – the inevitable saturation – the heart that sinks and sinks. And, just as one sometimes

feels that the cook was a good cook, and that the dish would have been done to a turn if only the caraway canister could have been kept out of reach, so one perceives that Carlyle had a true gift for history which was undone by his moralisations. There is an imaginative greatness in his conception of Cromwell, for instance, a vigour and a passion in the presentment of it; but all is spoilt by an overmastering desire to turn the strange Protector into a moral hero after Carlyle's own heart, so that, after all, the lines are blurred, the composition is confused, and the picture unconvincing.

But the most curious consequence of this predilection is to be seen in his Frederick the Great. In his later days Carlyle evolved a kind of super-morality by which all the most unpleasant qualities of human nature — egotism, insensitiveness, love of power — became the object of his religious adoration — a monstrous and inverted ethic, combining every possible disadvantage of virtue and of vice. He then, for some mysterious reason, pitched upon Frederick of Prussia as the great exemplar of this system, and devoted fourteen years of ceaseless labour to the elucidation of his history. Never was a misconception more complete. Frederick was in reality a knave of genius, a sceptical, eighteenth-century gambler with a strong will and a turn for organisation; and this was the creature whom Carlyle converted into an Ideal Man, a God-like Hero, a chosen instrument of the Eternal Powers. What the Eternal Powers would have done if a stray bullet had gone through Frederick's skull in the battle of Molwitz, Carlyle does not stop to inquire. By an ironical chance there happened to be two attractive elements in Frederick's mental outfit; he had a genuine passion for French literature, and he possessed a certain scurrilous wit, which constantly expressed itself

in extremely truculent fashion. Fate could not have selected two more unfortunate qualities with which to grace a hero of Carlyle's. Carlyle considered French literature trash; and the kind of joke that Frederick particularly relished filled him with profound aversion. A copy of Frederick's collected works still exists, with Carlyle's pencilled annotations in the margin. Some of the King's poetical compositions are far from proper; and it is amusing to observe the historian's exclamations of agitated regret whenever the Ideal Man alludes, in some mocking epigram, to his own or his friends' favourite peccadilloes. One can imagine, if Frederick were to return to earth for a moment and look over one's shoulder, his grin of fiendish delight.

The cruel Hohenzollern would certainly have laughed; but to gentler beings the spectacle of so much effort gone so utterly awry seems rather a matter for lamentation. The comedy of Carlyle's case topples over into tragedy – a tragedy of waste and unhappiness. If only he could have enjoyed himself! But he never did. Is it possible, one wonders, to bring forth anything that is worth bringing forth, without some pleasure – whatever pains there may be as well – in the parturition? One remembers Gibbon, cleaving his way, with such a magisterial gaiety, through the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire. He, too, no doubt, understood very little of his subject; but all was well with him and with his work. Why was it? The answer seems to be – he understood something that, for his purposes, was more important even than the Roman Empire – himself. He knew his own nature, his powers, his limitations, his desires; he was the master of an inward harmony. From Carlyle such knowledge was hidden. Blindness is always tragic; but the blindness that brings mighty

strength to baffled violence, towering aspirations to empty visions, and sublime self-confidence to bewilderment, remorse and misery, is terrible and pitiable indeed.

Unfortunately it was not only upon Carlyle himself that the doom descended. A woman of rare charm and brilliant powers was involved in his evil destiny. Regardless both of the demands of her temperament and the qualities of her spirit, he used her without scruple to subserve his own purposes, and made her as wretched as himself. She was his wife, and that was the end of the matter. She might have become a consummate writer or the ruler and inspirer of some fortunate social group; but all that was out of the question; was she not Mrs. Carlyle? It was her business to suppress her own instincts, to devote her whole life to the arrangement of his domestic comforts, to listen for days at a time, as she lay racked with illness on the sofa, to his descriptions of the battles of Frederick the Great. The time came when she felt that she could bear it no longer, and that at all hazards she must free herself from those stifling bonds. It is impossible not to wish that she had indeed fled as she intended with the unknown man of her choice. The blow to Carlyle's egoism would have been so dramatic, and the upheaval in that well-conducted world so satisfactory to contemplate! But, at the last moment, she changed her mind. Curiously enough, when it came to the point, it turned out that Mrs. Carlyle agreed with her husband. Even that bold spirit succumbed to the influences that surrounded it; she, too, was a mid-Victorian at heart. The woman's tragedy may be traced in those inimitable letters, whose intoxicating merriment flashes like lightning about the central figure, as it moves in sinister desolation.

against the background of a most peculiar age: an age of barbarism and prudery, of nobility and cheapness, of satisfaction and desperation; an age in which everything was discovered and nothing known; an age in which all the outlines were tremendous and all the details sordid; when gas-jets struggled feebly through the circumambient fog, when the hour of dinner might be at any moment between two and six, when the doses of rhubarb were periodic and gigantic, when pet dogs threw themselves out of upper storey windows, when cooks reeled drunk in areas, when one sat for hours with one's feet in dirty straw dragged along the streets by horses, when an antimacassar was on every chair, and the baths were minute tin circles, and the beds were full of bugs and disasters.

After it was all over and his wife was dead, Carlyle realised what had happened. But all that he could do was to take refuge from the truth in the vain vehemence of sentimental self-reproaches. He committed his confessions to Froude without sufficient instructions; and when he died he left behind him a legacy of doubt and scandal. But now, at length, some enjoyment appeared upon the scene. No one was happier than Froude, with an agitated conscience and a sense of duty that involved the divulgence of dreadful domesticities; while the Victorian public feasted upon the unexpected banquet to its heart's content.

From *Portraits in Miniature* (1931)

XXI  
PERCY LUBBOCK  
ETON

OUR tearful prayerful Founder, flourishing his sceptre in school-yard, may wonder indeed what has come to the poor scholars and sad priests of his college, what profane ambition has possessed them. If he watches the faces of the children as they assemble for absence, he must shrink in shyness, not to say in horror, before the easy assurance of their looks; all too clear it is that they aren't taught to dread the world. Our talk of grateful homage to Henry the gentle and hapless, the star-crossed king, must truly sound ironic; what has he to say to this bouncing progeny, born to England in such amplitude of all the good things of the earth, that inundates the retreat which his charity and piety designed for a very different brood? It is written all over our Eton that life is not to be refused, not to be despised when it is ample and honourable. Don't be deceived, I say again, by the unworldly airs of ancient romance that breathe on us at Eton in the shade of the huge grey chapel. Our virtue, whatever it may be, is neither fugitive nor cloistered; no painful yearning for the unknowable and ineffable torments us here. The good earth is open to us, good enough for us; and there we are to accept our destiny – why indeed should we quarrel with it? Our masters at Eton won't help us to quarrel with it, not even the most retiring, the most twilight-loving amongst them. I seem in truth

to remember that not many of them in my time had an appearance of loving the twilight; on the whole they were plainly attached to the sun and the holiday afternoon. But even the most enshaded had their view of the great fortunate world, a view in which its palms and prizes weren't disparaged; or perhaps I should rather call it a view of hopeful and heroic youth – youth that will win the palms of the world and wear them with modesty and grace. Success before men – however lightly you hold it in the void you must desire it for the youthful hero whom it crowns so becomingly; and in one way or another there is honour at Eton for success, no doubt.

I have a picture, as it happens, that will show how it is honoured most poetically: a small picture which brings us back to pleasant company, that of the old Horatian scholar of the grove by the coast of Kent. It chances opportunely that he pays a visit to Eton on a summer evening, seeks me out (as one lately a pupil of his grove) and takes me for a stroll in the playing-fields. By this time I am larger beside him than of old; but we drop into the same old strain of good sound talk and we enjoy the evening. We wander in the playing-fields, we turn down Poet's Walk toward Sixth Form Bench, by the shining sliding river; and presently we fall in with some friend of ours who tells us that he has just been meeting and greeting – whom, do you think? – a very celebrated person, once the most brilliant of Eton boys, now a man of high and public position in the world, a statesman, and not only a statesman but almost everything else of which ambition dreams. This man – even I know all about him – is one of the great figures among the living in our annals; he is the type and fulfilment of qualities truly classical, for to the honours of the world he adds the ornament of culture,

and he conciliates not the Muses only but the crowd; he fills the popular eye, he compels the critical mind, he is fortune's favourite – the 'magnificent man,' no less, of the Athenian sage. And it appears that he too is revisiting Eton this evening, is strolling in the playing-fields of his brilliant youth, is actually just over there, across Sheep's Bridge, meditatively pacing, serenely enjoying his memories in an hour that he has snatched from the splendid claims of his vocation. His name is mentioned; and the light that beams in the look of the venerable scholar, hearing the name, is most poetic.

'Ah, I knew him when he was a boy – and a charming boy he was !' The old man had been a master at Eton when this rare creature of promise, young Pericles himself, had passed through the school; they hadn't met since then, and here was a lucky chance that had brought them both to Eton again on the same evening – the boy who had crowned his promise in the world, the schoolmaster who had grown old in the seclusion of his grove. Duly effacing myself, I watched them as they met on Sheep's Bridge. There on one side was Pericles, now in the fullness of his comely and decorate life; he threw up his hands in pleasure and recognition, with a gesture that was gracious as became his greatness, deferential as became the memory of his boyishness; for he was a schoolboy again, bright in the prime of promise, when he caught sight of this revered old figure of the past, and yet he was also a great man in the world, affably recalling and saluting a mild recluse. And on the other side, there was the aged mentor, he who remains behind in the shadow when the heroes of his training wave him their gay good-bye and spring forth into the sun – he who watches their triumph, applauds them unheard, and is content to take for his own reward the mere echo of the acclamation which is

theirs. He has given whatever he had to give – ('they'll say, who know the truth') – given his best to the service of youth and freedom; and it is a pleasant thing to see him step forward and hail the charming boy who is now the goodly statesman. A poetic glimpse indeed: and if one brings the right imagination to it a glimpse that is eloquent of the history of Eton.

It was different in my time; but in the days of which these two were happily reminding each other, 'mid-Victorian' days, the Eton master was pleased to think of himself, and with reason thought of himself, as the trainer of the youth of heroes. The ardent and generous stripling, you remember, was placed in the story under the care of the wise old monster Chiron – only monster is a harsh word for the oddly formed but infinitely faithful and kindly creature; and Chiron, little fitted in his uncouthness to shine conspicuous on his own account, lavished his stores of wisdom and experience on the boy, tried him with rigorous discipline, inspired him to be dauntless in effort, lofty in resolve; and Chiron at length dismissed the fine tall youth – whom indeed he couldn't have detained a moment longer – and stood at the door of his sequestered cave with a blessing, and I dare say a tear of regret and pride, for a last sight of the yellow-haired light-stepping hero – who for his part was blithe to be gone, though he waved a grateful and affectionate good-bye to the old creature as he disappeared. It is an appealing tale, and I don't wonder if in many an age the faithful Chiron has cheered himself with the thought of it; for as he turns back to his cave again it must seem rather dull and dim without the liveliness of that bright head, and solitary aches and regrets are sweetened if one recalls that they are the poetry of all ages. Even so, says Chiron to himself: the Grecian tale is brought to pass

again by the Thames, and who shall say that it isn't as fair, as rare as ever ? Shall not a fond and obscure old creature uplift his heart, remembering that he has given his best to the nurture of Jason and Achilles ?

The poet of 'Ionica,' it was he who shaped this notion of the schoolmaster's office into the form of romance and bequeathed it to Eton. To him with his unquiet genius there was consolation in the fancy; and he needed to be consoled, for his imperious and incisive speech was the disguise of a spirit so restless in its hunger that it drove him — sent him wandering like a ghost beneath the elms of the playing-fields, blank and solitary in the loss of his companions, as the world took them away from him year by year. He turned in his loneliness to the comfort of poetry: a slender vein of it, but true and rare, with a pulse of emotion beating in it — mournful emotion too near to pain, too clear-sighted in disillusionment, to be felt as a sentimental joy. 'Ionica,' from which I quoted a line just now, is a small book, not flawless; but as the confession and testament of a schoolmaster it surely has a golden finality. A man of bold reason who wasn't afraid of poetry, a romantic lover of youth who was all too sharply aware that youth can't stay, can't wait to be adored; so that he couldn't bemuse himself in a mere haze of dreams, he couldn't blind his fancy: this man voiced the thought of all those, they must be many, who have felt of the reward of the schoolmaster that it is bitterly mixed. To give so much and to get so much, to give with mind and heart and to get so much in return to fill them both — and then to lose so much, to be always losing; it is the schoolmaster's portion, who stays behind while youth that is life and work to him is always in flight. If the man who is left behind can make poetry of his loss, who shall grudge it him ? — the

more there is of it the better, if poetry it is. And indeed it is, here at Eton: a small volume of it, quiet and exquisite and just, declaring the pride of a lover of youth, and the ache in the pride. Such was the gift that William Cory left to Eton, the place where his difficult spirit could not rest.

If it has happened that in later days this picturesque legend of master and boy has been forgotten, or passed in silence, the reason may be that it is too quickly vulgarised. In the hands of a poet it is well; but you may shudder to recall the manner of it when somebody else takes it up. There is the right Athenian grace, that touches the prettiness of the picture with moderation, keeping it cool and clear; and then there is a different style, where such a little thing, a shade of luxuriance, a quiver of lacrymosity, spoils it all. To hold the perfect tone is to balance on a hair's-breadth; and perhaps when you have seen the balance lost, seen the depth of falsity into which sentiment drops like a stone, you fly off in horror to less precarious fancies. It isn't surprising; for we all know the anguish of the spectacle when the poet's truth and beauty are aped by somebody else. And so, I dare say, we don't find that poetry, which can't be dead, is easily suffered to speak in later and brisker days at Eton. No great matter for that, maybe; for it is certain that it can't be dead, however dumb, and I suppose it takes care of itself; it thrills in silence, let us hope, when the ghost of Ionicus wanders again by Fellow's Pond, watches a new generation of Eton's youth and finds it reassuringly like the old. And yet there is a loss, and it seems a misfortune if the old Greek story is shyly ignored; for there are other falsities into which sentiment tumbles, not only that one of a too effusive luxury. The story I have told has a singular boon in a retreat like Eton,

where the voices of the world are never beyond a short earshot. Eton knows so well the noise of success, of fortune and good cheer, that another and less confident tune of music, stealing into a summer evening by the river-bank, isn't amiss. A little fine melody is good for the ear and keeps it true.

It keeps it true, not only in the affair of sentiment, but in another – in the louder affair of Eton's commerce with success. Eton, that lies so near the frequented highway of life, is exposed to a danger; and it may be a wholesome risk in many ways, but it isn't one that we can afford to disregard. I think of some of our old friends among the masters of the school, figures of independence, upholding the genius of Eton; and the thought of them reminds me how they stood against the danger of which I speak. They saw it, of course; they knew that the traffic of the highway, resounding at such close quarters, might easily derange a genius that is really more at home in a deeper seclusion. The spirit of a school doesn't wish to esteem the rewards of life at their vulgar value; left to itself, it has its own manner of reckoning their worth – a worth that isn't in them by nature, for they owe it to the sons of the school who go forth to win and wear them. You see what I mean: Eton takes not the slightest interest in the prize-giving world, save only as it fulfils the destiny of these sons; it is they, the sons, who give a value to the world, never the world to them. This is Eton's own attitude and natural bearing toward success in the highway – isn't it? Some of our old friends certainly thought so; they wouldn't have Eton perturbed and distracted from her independent ways by any mundane noise. If life is good enough for our children, so much the better for life: that is the poetic manner of appraising the glory that awaits young Jason, and our ears

PERCY LUBBOCK

are attuned to it, as I say, by the clear strain of that melody in the twilight. And now I know the door I shall next open and the threshold I shall cross, pursuing this wandering search for the genius of the place.

From *Shades of Eton* (1929)

XXII  
HELEN THOMAS  
THE NEW HOUSE

*This is taken from 'World without End,' in which Mrs. Thomas continues from 'As it Was,' the story of her life with her husband, the writer, Edward Thomas, who was killed in the war.*

THE new house was a large square farm house standing away from the road in the midst of its own fields. Oast houses, cow sheds, stables, hayricks and a huge barn were grouped about it on two sides. On the other side was a large garden and orchard, and in the front was a little garden opening into a field in which stood great oak trees, and in whose coppice-like hedges sang innumerable nightingales.

The house had big rooms, and long flagged passages leading to dairies, store-rooms and an immense kitchen and scullery. In the scullery was a huge brick oven, and two large coppers, one for brewing beer, one for washing clothes. The outside door opened into a brick-paved shed where there was a pump and another big copper, and here all day the farm boys washed milk cans and churns, and here the milk-cooler was set up. Everything in this shed shone with brightness and here it was always cool.

The cows of which there were about fifty were turned out into the meadow in front of the house, and the children became quite used to these gentle creatures staring and sniffing at them, and soon learned to know

them by name. Here on this farm we became familiar with the cycle of work on the land from early spring till Christmas. The bush harrow, plough, sickle and the team of horses became familiar objects to us all, and we saw and took part in many of the operations on the farm. We came to know the whole process of the cultivation of hops from the ploughing between the 'hills,' and the stringing and 'twiddling,' to the picking and drying, and the feasting on pay-day. The charcoal burner carried on his ancient trade at our very door. He lived in a tent in the farm yard near his cone, a solitary being, avoided by the village people who looked down on him and his traditional calling. Of course we tried to talk to him and find out about his work, but he was a taciturn fellow, and even over a mug of beer at the inn near by David could not get a word out of him. Once I remember when he was at the inn I saw what I thought were flames coming out of the cone, and thinking that his charcoal would be spoilt I ran as fast as I could to the inn to tell him of the disaster. He shook his head, but nevertheless came with me to reassure me that what I saw was not flame but luminous gas, and that all was well. After that he tried to ingratiate himself with the children, but they were frightened of his black face, and so he withdrew into himself again.

This inn was called 'The Shant,' and was indeed nothing more than a sort of rough shed. It was kept by an old couple who lived in a neat little cottage adjoining the inn. Mrs. Turner worked for me, and it was she who taught me how to make and bake bread in the brick oven. How I loved this work — getting the oven white hot with burning faggots, and raking the hot ash in a circle, sweeping the floor clean with a wet besom, then with a long iron spade-shaped

implement whose name I forget putting the loaves in the clean hot bricks, and seeing them begin to rise before I had time to shut the iron door, and banking up the hot ashes against it to keep out the draught. All this had to be done very quickly, so that the oven should not get cool before every loaf was in. She taught me how to make the dough, set it, and shape it into loaves.

All this work I loved, as I did the house work, the gardening or any work which gave my strong body exercise, and which satisfied my spirit with its human necessity. David too was glad for me to do these things, and I tried my hand at brewing, wine-making, hop-picking and even reaping. Of course hay-making on the lovely slope of Blooming meadow was a festival for us all at the farm, and we learnt how the ricks that rose like a town in the rick yard were shaped so symmetrically, and thatched as carefully as a house. It is this full life of homely doings that I remember chiefly at the farm – the early morning expeditions with David to a large pond about three miles away to fish for perch and roach and even pike; the walks to Penshurst and Leigh and Ightham Moat; the picking and storing of apples; the making of quince jam; the finding of an owl's or a nightingale's nest; the wood-pecker which cut the air in scallops as it flew from oak to oak; the white owl which brought its young to the roof ridge to be fed; the beautiful plough-horses with their shining brass ornaments; the cows going into their stalls like people going into their pews in Church; the building and thatching of the ricks; the hedging and ditching; the wood cutting and faggot binding by men whose fathers had done the same work and whose fathers' fathers too; the work of the farm, leisured as the coming and going of the seasons; the lovely cycle of

ploughing, sowing and reaping; the slow experienced labourers, whose knowledge had come to them as the acorns come to the oaks, whose skill had come as the swallows' skill, who are satisfied in their hard life as are the oaks and the swallows in theirs. How I loved it all, and with what joy and strength it filled my being, so that when I needed joy and strength they did not fail me. And often and often I did need them. There were many dark periods while we were here, many days of silence and wretchedness and separation, for sometimes in these moods David would stride away, perhaps for days, wrestling with the devil that tormented his spirit.

In an unconscious way as I grew older I came to realise that everything that is a part of life is inevitable to it, and must therefore be good. I could not be borne high upon the crest of ecstasy and joy unless I also knew the dreadful depths of the trough of the great waves of life. I could not be irradiated by such love without being swept by the shadow of despair. The rich teeming earth from which all beauty comes is fed with decay; out of the sweat and labour of men grows the corn. We are born to die; if death were not, life would not be either. Pain and weakness and evil, as well as strength and passion and health, are part of the beautiful pattern of life, and as I grew up I learned that life is richer and fuller and finer the more you can understand not only in your brain and intellect but in your very being, that you must accept it all; without bitterness the agony, without complacency the joy. Dimly I perceived that it was because I was I that life came to me like this. My strong instinctive body, my too sensitive awareness of David's suffering, my utter lack of resignation, my eager passionate exaction from life of

all it had to give, the romantic ideals in which I so deeply believed, all those qualities which gave life for me its colour and intensity made me also vulnerable to its weapons.

David had a fair amount of work, but never enough to keep him from anxiety, and never enough to free him from the hateful hack-work books written to the order of publishers, which though he did them well did not at all satisfy his own creative impulse, the damming up of which contributed largely to his melancholy. Yet against this has to be put that he was untrammelled by routine. He loved the life he lived away from towns, his own master, though in a freedom that perhaps gave him too much opportunity for brooding and for introspective doubts and hatreds of himself. He went to London fairly often, and kept in touch with a large circle of friends, most of them writers and poets, but others whom he had known at Oxford in different professions. And these friends kept up the custom of our lively week-ends, and some became very intimate with the different phases of our domestic life, and helped both David and me over difficult periods.

At this time David worked at a tiny cottage about a mile away from the farm, which he rented for half-a-crown a week from a neighbouring farmer. We wore a footpath to this cottage – first through a copse, then past a pond, and then over a fence into a rough meadow. It has now been obliterated, and no one would know that the cottage and the big farm house had ever had any connection with each other. There was always something to be seen on this path – a shrew mouse running up a corn stalk, a heron flying overhead, a hedgehog nosing about in the dead leaves, or a fox the same colour as the clay of the Weald trotting along the side of the copse.

Because of David's frequent absences I was very much alone here. Apart from the week-ends in the fine weather, I led a very unsocial life, and I missed the friends we had left at Bearden. For this village, which was itself ugly and repellent though in such beautiful country, did not yield a single congenial friend, and often weeks went by when I spoke to no one except the Turners at 'The Shant' and my own household.

At these times my daily letters to David were my great delight, and all day I thought of what I should say and talk about in them. As the evening drew near I longed for the time to come when I could be alone and quiet to write all that my heart and mind were full of. My whole life was expressed in these letters. It was in a state of joyful excitement that I wrote page after page so quickly that only David, familiar with my awful writing, could have read them. To these letters I got long replies every day, for always, when he was away, to write and receive these letters was our great need. It was David's constant fear that some day I should be infected with his melancholy, and that my naturally happy nature would be changed. But something – a kind of certainty that, in spite of the turgid flood which often seemed to sweep away and destroy everything, there was something which it could not destroy, something which our love had created, and which like a rock supporting us would endure – kept my nature intense and sensitive, so that when happiness came there was not a moment whose preciousness I did not realise and appreciate, whose beauty and fullness even now I fail to remember in every detail. When it seemed that happiness had gone for ever it was into the treasury of memories that I dipped if David needed to be reassured that all was well with me.

David was so self-critical and uncompromising in

his demand for sincerity and truth, and hatred of hypocrisy or flattery, that a little appreciation and success would have been a very valuable stimulant to him. It would not have spoilt him, but would have brought out the best in him, and have given him that faith in himself which would have been a strong weapon with which to fight that other side of his nature, which was so destructive. I used to wish that he had just the little money that would relieve him from the necessity of pot-boiling work, and give him more freedom to do his best work in his own time. But this he never had.

He had many friends who admired his work and loved him. He drew people to him by his exacting need of them. They had to come more than half-way to meet his reserved and shy nature, but their effort was well repaid, for with his personal charm, his talk, his dry humour, his clear intellect, his sincerity, his generous appreciation of his contemporaries, and his ungrudging efforts on their behalf, his never failing loyalty – and added to these qualities his striking appearance and a beautiful voice – it is not to be wondered at that he created in the hearts of the people with whom he came into contact a more than ordinary friendship. He made the same impression on many different kinds of people, and indeed I should think that there are few men who have been loved by his fellows with such rare and deep affection as was David throughout his life. My love for him never lost its passionate intensity. My letters to him were love-letters, and his home coming meant for me to be lifted into Heaven.

We cannot say why we love people. There is no reason for passionate love. But the quality in him that I most admired was his sincerity. There was

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never any pretence between us. All was open and true. Often he was bitter and cruel, but I could bear it because I knew all. There was nothing left for me to guess at, no lies, no falsity. All was known, all was suffered and endured; and afterwards there was no reserve in our joy. If we love deeply we must also suffer deeply; for the price for the capacity for ecstatic joy is anguish. And so it was with us to the end.

From *World Without End* (1931)

## XXIII

### MAURICE BARING

### DIPLOMACY

THE chief drawback of diplomatic life is that diplomats are inclined, instead of making friends with the natives of the country to which they are accredited, to live in a small circle entirely among themselves. This is likely to happen in the smaller places, but there is no excuse for it in Paris. If one did not make friends with the French people it was one's own fault. In those days the French entertained a great deal; the only drawback to the situation was the political tension produced, first by Fashoda, secondly by the South African War, and thirdly by the Dreyfus trial. The latter episode made conversation on all other topics quite impossible. No political fact, no social fact, no artistic fact, no play, no book, no picture could any longer be taken at its own value and appreciated on its own merits. It was seen from one angle only, namely, how it affected the Dreyfus case. I was given a letter of introduction to an archæologist and by him another to Anatole France. He at once took for granted that I had come to talk about the Dreyfus case, and he talked about nothing else. It made the situation of foreigners peculiarly difficult, because if they were even suspected of holding or expressing an opinion on the burning topic of the day, nobody would speak to them again, and it got about at one moment that our Military Attaché had

expressed an opinion at a Club (which he had not done) and the matter created quite a storm. He walked to the Embassy for the next few days in a false beard, as he said he was in danger of being assassinated.

We were just as touchy about the South African War at that moment as the French were about the Dreyfus case, and one afternoon there was a concert given for the English wounded in South Africa at which Madame Sarah Bernhardt recited, and recited extremely well. Among the audience there was present a French lady of half-English extraction who had a great many English friends. After the most interesting part of the programme was over, she, having had enough of the concert, and small wonder, for, with the exception of the recitation I have mentioned, it was even more dreary than most charity concerts are, left the building. Her departure was noticed, and the rumour started that she had left the concert to show that she was a pro-Boer, and against concerts in favour of the English wounded. The tale was reported all over Paris, and even reached the ears of the Prince of Wales; and although the matter was palpably absurd, and recognised to be absurd as soon as she heard of the rumour and denied it, which happened a fortnight later, nevertheless the legend remained in some quarters among the French, not the English, that this lady, who had received innumerable kindnesses from English people, and most of whose friends were English, had nevertheless sided with the Boers.

French society was split in twain owing to the Dreyfus case. The proportion in the whole country was about five to two – five people believing in Dreyfus' guilt, and two in his innocence. But in no family was there unanimity. Immemorial friendships were suddenly broken, and intimate blood ties were

severed. You never knew who was going to be *Dreyfusard* and who would be *anti-Dreyfusard*. A conversation at the Club, if one were dining there in the company of Frenchmen, nearly always began by somebody saying: 'I am the most impartial man alive and I hate controversy, but if Dreyfus is guilty, and no one who is not a congenital idiot can harbour the slightest doubt about that . . .'

People who held an opposite point of view said nothing. There was a third party, those who, while feeling uncertain of his guilt or innocence, were in favour of a revision of the trial. For two years people spoke of nothing else from morning till night, and I remember M. Édouard Rod saying one day, 'What on earth shall we talk about when the *affaire* is over ?'

The curious thing is that when the affair *was* over, when the news actually came that the verdict had been passed, and that Dreyfus had been found guilty with extenuating circumstances, the affair was never mentioned again. At four o'clock that afternoon when the news spread about Paris, the topic died. What they talked of next I cannot remember – but it was not Dreyfus.

To go back to the archæologist, I saw him concerned in an episode which throws a considerable light on certain events in the archæological world which happened later. You will remember that quite lately a storm raged over some mysterious objects found at Glozel, or, if Glozel is a person, by Glozel. Some bits of pottery, I believe, or remains of some kind were discovered, which were said to be of the very greatest prehistoric antiquity. Somebody then turned up who said, 'these remains were not old at all, but had been made quite lately, and for commercial

purposes.' There was a long and most fierce controversy on the subject, and history took the opportunity of repeating itself. The archæologist, who is an authority on everything to do with prehistory, said the remains were genuine. Quite lately the officer who was second in command of the Paris police was shot dead because he said that the remains were not genuine, and the man who shot him said it wasn't fair.

Well, when I was in Paris one fine day at a well-known second-hand dealer's, an enormous Greek vase was exhibited in a glass case. It was black, with the usual Flaxman designs of Helen of Troy spinning, and Hercules being unkind to a hydra, and Orpheus charming a boa-constrictor around it. It was said to be an extremely fine specimen. After it had been exhibited for some time, the director of a small museum in the south of Italy wrote to the directors of the Louvre, and said that the vase that was being exhibited in Paris must be a forgery, because the original vase was in their own museum.

The archæologist inspected the vase, and proclaimed it to be genuine. Correspondence raged for some time, with ever-increasing acrimony. I was taken to see the vase by Mrs. Strong, who was afterwards head of the British School of Archæology at Rome, in the company with the archæologist. On this occasion the archæologist said that it was quite impossible that the vase could be a forgery. It was Greek work of the finest period and the highest quality.

When the controversy was at its height, a young workman turned up (I think he was an Italian, he was eighteen years old) and asked to be paid for the vase, which he said he had copied himself from the vase in Italy. By scratching the terra-cotta it was found that any sort of antiquity was out of the question. It had

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been made by the workman who claimed to have made it. Later on there was the same trouble about a tiara which was said to belong to Tissaphernes, and which afterwards turned out to have been made by Tiffany.

The moral of all this is, never believe that experts are infallible, and least of all experts in prehistoric archaeology.

I stayed in Paris until August 1900, when, after having gone up for an examination in International Law, in which I failed, I was appointed Third Secretary to the Legation at Copenhagen. All future Ambassadors, I was told encouragingly, went to Copenhagen. The Minister was Sir Edward Goschen, who was alone there when I arrived. It seemed very quiet after Paris. Here the duty of being present at the railway station was far more frequent, owing to the visits of different royalties.

Early in the next year Queen Victoria died, and in September of the same year King Edward VII arrived in Denmark to pay his first visit as King of England. The King was to arrive at Elsinore on board the *Osborne*, and the staff, which consisted of the Minister and myself, had received orders to go to Elsinore to meet His Majesty on board the yacht. His Majesty was to land in time to meet the King of Denmark, the Crown Prince of Denmark and all the Danish Royal Family, the King of Greece, Queen Alexandra, the Emperor and Empress of Russia, the Dowager Empress of Russia, Prince and Princess Charles of Denmark, and other members of the various Royal Families. We were to go in uniform.

The train started at eight. I was living in the Legation: my rooms were isolated from Sir Edward Goschen's house, and I had a Danish servant called

Peter. He had been told to call me punctually at seven. He forgot, or overslept himself. I awoke by accident and found to my horror that it was twenty-five minutes to eight. The station was far off, and I had to dress in uniform. I dressed like lightning, but it is not easy to dress like lightning in a diplomatic uniform. The tight boots are the difficulty. I had no time to wash or shave. I got a cab, and we drove at full gallop to the railway station, and I got into Sir Edward's carriage just as the train was moving out of the station. At Elsinore there was fortunately time to spare before going on board the *Osborne*, and I was able to get shaved in the village. Then we went on board, and were presented to the King and kissed his hand on his Accession. He was dressed in the uniform of the Danish Hussars, which was light blue cloth, with silver facings, cherry-coloured pants, and shiny black top-boots: the kind of uniform I imagine Rupert of Hentzau to have worn. It was a hot day.

When we got on board the yacht the King took Sir Edward down to his cabin, and I was left to the charge of a naval officer and given a glass of port with a biscuit. At 10.45 the King and Sir Edward came up on deck, and said it was time to go, as the landing was timed for 11 o'clock. We were to go ashore in a boat rowed by sailors, and the King said, as we stood on the deck, 'Where is the boat ?'

We looked round, and the wide expanse of the calm sea there did not seem to be any trace of a boat. Incredible as it seemed, there was no boat below the gangway. The King repeated with greater emphasis, 'Where is the boat ?' A dreamlike sensation came over us. The situation seemed to be so completely unreal; it seemed impossible that they should have forgotten to order a boat, and that there should be no boat to take

the King ashore. The King grew very angry indeed, and stamped his foot, and said that he was keeping the Emperor of Russia waiting. A fearful panic ensued. Officers and sailors hurried in every direction, and then we realised what had happened. The boat had originally come alongside on the wrong side of the ship, to the starboard instead of to the port gangway or *vice versa*. The mistake had been noted, and those behind cried forward and those before called back, and it had begun pulling round to get to its right side. Then, hearing shouts from the panic-stricken naval officers, when it was half-way round it had turned back again. Orders and counter-orders were given. The King was not the least appeased. His explosion of wrath increased and was terrible, and extremely impressive. The point is his dignity was not diminished by one jot. I had seen nothing to equal the effect since the explosion of Mr. Tarver (the French master at Eton), when a boy translated *encore* by 'again.' In the meantime a new boat was lowered and at last we went ashore. We were just in time, and we were greeted by a salute of guns.

That evening we were entertained at the Palace of Fredensborg, where the room was paved, as Horace Walpole once said, with beaten princes. Sir Edward Goschen was a Minister of infinite humour. It was the same Sir Edward Goschen who had the 'scrap of paper' adventure at the beginning of the war. He was extremely observant. He used to note in his diary minute facts; for instance, that the Duke of Cumberland's collar had slipped off the back collar-stud, or that the first secretary at the Italian Legation had not shaved for two days. He used to play battledore and shuttlecock in a large empty ballroom, and be fearfully annoyed if he was beaten. He also played cup and ball

for hours at a time, and was a great expert at 'prominent places.'

Life at Copenhagen was quiet and restricted after that at Paris. The Danes were more difficult to get to know than the French; they disliked diplomats, and to get to know them well it was necessary to learn their language. This was easy, and had the advantage of enabling one to appreciate their drama, and their acting, which was excellent. They acted Shakespeare and Ibsen, and had an extremely good ballet.

The Danish intelligentsia were very fond of food, and they used to have opulent suppers, which lasted well into the night. They had already begun in those days to juggle with the marriage and divorce laws with such frequency that it was exceedingly difficult to know which wife belonged to which husband. Any wife seemed to belong to any husband. I made friends with an author whose house was furnished entirely with impressionist pictures, of cows in mists – the kind of pictures which seemed surprising in those days, though of course they are old-fashioned to-day – ugly still life, and a carrot painted to be cruder than Nature. The author in question was married. He had been married twice, but his first wife still came to dinner every Sunday. She sat at a table by herself, to show she was less important than the second wife, and her children were not allowed to speak to her except through a third person.

I also made the acquaintance of George Brandes, the critic. He had just written a book about Shakespeare, in which he developed a point of view which in those days seemed slightly paradoxical, namely, that Shakespeare had written his plays himself. I stayed at Copenhagen until January 1902, when I was transferred to Rome, where I learnt to know another

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phase of diplomatic life: the post that is neither so large as Paris nor so small as Copenhagen, but intermediate. But there is no time left to talk about Rome.

And so this fragmentary screen-show must come to an end. You know how different life looks in a close-up from what it seems when viewed from a further point of vantage. I have attempted to give you a few arbitrary close-ups. I know it could be done differently, not only by a philosophical historian, but by, say, a serious Foreign Secretary, and I don't want you to believe that the Foreign Secretary must be necessarily a fool, or that I am necessarily a wise man.

From *Lost Lectures* (1932)

XXIV  
SIR JAMES JEANS  
THE DYING SUN

A FEW stars are known which are hardly bigger than the earth, but the majority are so large that hundreds of thousands of earths could be packed inside each and leave room to spare; here and there we come upon a giant star large enough to contain millions of millions of earths. And the total number of stars in the universe is probably something like the total number of grains of sand on all the sea-shores of the world. Such is the littleness of our home in space when measured up against the total substance of the universe.

This vast multitude of stars are wandering about in space. A few form groups which journey in company, but the majority are solitary travellers. And they travel through a universe so spacious that it is an event of almost unimaginable rarity for a star to come anywhere near to another star. For the most part each voyages in splendid isolation, like a ship on an empty ocean. In a scale model in which the stars are ships, the average ship will be well over a million miles from its nearest neighbour, whence it is easy to understand why a ship seldom finds another within hailing distance.

We believe, nevertheless, that some two thousand million years ago this rare event took place, and that a second star, wandering blindly through space,

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happened to come within hailing distance of the sun. Just as the sun and moon raise tides on the earth, so this second star must have raised tides on the surface of the sun. But they would be very different from the puny tides which the small mass of the moon raises in our oceans; a huge tidal wave must have travelled over the surface of the sun, ultimately forming a mountain of prodigious height, which would rise ever higher and higher as the cause of the disturbance came nearer and nearer. And, before the second star began to recede, its tidal pull had become so powerful that this mountain was torn to pieces and threw off small fragments of itself, much as the crest of a wave throws off spray. These small fragments have been circulating around their parent sun ever since. They are the planets, great and small, of which our earth is one.

The sun and the other stars we see in the sky are all intensely hot – far too hot for life to be able to obtain or retain a footing on them. So also no doubt were the ejected fragments of the sun when they were first thrown off. Gradually they cooled, until now they have but little intrinsic heat left, their warmth being derived almost entirely from the radiation which the sun pours down upon them. In course of time, we know not how, when, or why, one of these cooling fragments gave birth to life. It started in simple organisms whose vital capacities consisted of little beyond reproduction and death. But from these humble beginnings emerged a stream of life which, advancing through ever greater and greater complexity, has culminated in beings whose lives are largely centred in their emotions and ambitions, their æsthetic appreciations, and the religions in which their highest hopes and noblest aspirations lie enshrined.

Although we cannot speak with any certainty, it seems most likely that humanity came into existence in some such way as this. Standing on our microscopic fragment of a grain of sand, we attempt to discover the nature and purpose of the universe which surrounds our home in space and time. Our first impression is something akin to terror. We find the universe terrifying because of its vast meaningless distances, terrifying because of its inconceivably long vistas of time which dwarf human history to the twinkling of an eye, terrifying because of our extreme loneliness, and because of the material insignificance of our home in space – a millionth part of a grain of sand out of all the sea-sand in the world. But above all else, we find the universe terrifying because it appears to be indifferent to life like our own; emotion, ambition and achievement, art and religion all seem equally foreign to its plan. Perhaps indeed we ought to say it appears to be actively hostile to life like our own. For the most part, empty space is so cold that all life in it would be frozen; most of the matter in space is so hot as to make life on it impossible; space is traversed, and astronomical bodies continually bombarded, by radiation of a variety of kinds, much of which is probably inimical to, or even destructive of, life.

Into such a universe we have stumbled, if not exactly by mistake, at least as the result of what may properly be described as an accident. The use of such a word need not imply any surprise that our earth exists, for accidents will happen, and if the universe goes on for long enough, every conceivable accident is likely to happen in time. It was, I think, Huxley who said that six monkeys, set to strum unintelligently on typewriters for millions of millions of years, would

be bound in time to write all the books in the British Museum. If we examined the last page which a particular monkey had typed, and found that it had chanced, in its blind strumming, to type a Shakespeare sonnet, we should rightly regard the occurrence as a remarkable accident, but if we looked through all the millions of pages the monkeys had turned off in untold millions of years, we might be sure of finding a Shakespeare sonnet somewhere amongst them, the product of the blind play of chance. In the same way, millions of millions of stars wandering blindly through space for millions of millions of years are bound to meet with every sort of accident, and so are bound to produce a certain limited number of planetary systems in time. Yet the number of these must be very small in comparison with the total number of stars in the sky.

This rarity of planetary systems is important, because so far as we can see, life of the kind we know on earth could only originate on planets like the earth. It needs suitable physical conditions for its appearance, the most important of which is a temperature at which substances can exist in the liquid state.

The stars themselves are disqualified by being far too hot. We may think of them as a vast collection of fires scattered throughout space, providing warmth in a climate which is at most some four degrees above absolute zero – about 484 degrees of frost on our Fahrenheit scale – and is even lower in the vast stretches of space which lie out beyond the Milky Way. Away from the fires there is this unimaginable cold of hundreds of degrees of frost, close up to them there is a temperature of thousands of degrees, at which all solids melt, all liquids boil.

Life can only exist inside a narrow temperate zone which surrounds each of these fires at a very definite

distance. Outside these zones life would be frozen; inside it would be shrivelled up. At a rough computation, these zones within which life is possible, all added together, constitute less than a thousand million millionth part of the whole of space. And even inside them, life must be of very rare occurrence, for it is so unusual an accident for suns to throw off planets as our own sun has done, that probably only about one star in 100,000 has a planet revolving round it in the small zone in which life is possible.

Just for this reason it seems incredible that the universe can have been designed primarily to produce life like our own; had it been so, surely we might have expected to find a better proportion between the magnitude of the mechanism and the amount of the product. At first glance at least, life seems to be an utterly unimportant by-product; we living things are somehow off the main line.

We do not know whether suitable physical conditions are sufficient in themselves to produce life. One school of thought holds that as the earth gradually cooled, it was natural, and indeed almost inevitable, that life should come. Another holds that after one accident had brought the earth into being, a second was necessary to produce life. The material constituents of a living body are perfectly ordinary chemical atoms - carbon, such as we find in soot or lampblack; hydrogen and oxygen, such as we find in water; nitrogen, such as forms the greater part of the atmosphere; and so on. Every kind of atom necessary for life must have existed on the new born earth. At intervals, a group of atoms might happen to arrange themselves in the way in which they are arranged in the living cell. Indeed, given sufficient time, they would be certain to do so, just as certain as the six

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monkeys would be certain, given sufficient time, to type off a Shakespeare sonnet. But would they then be a living cell? In other words, is a living cell merely a group of ordinary atoms arranged in some non-ordinary way, or is it something more? Is it merely atoms, or is it atoms plus life? Or, to put it in another way, could a sufficiently skilful chemist create life out of the necessary atoms, as a boy can create a machine out of Meccano, *and then make it go?* We do not know the answer. When it comes it will give us some indication whether other worlds in space are inhabited like ours, and so must have the greatest influence on our interpretation of the meaning of life – it may well produce a greater revolution of thought than Galileo's astronomy or Darwin's biology.

From *The Mysterious Universe* (1930)

## XXV

### R. G. COLLINGWOOD

### PLAY

*The book from which this is taken, 'Speculum Mentis' (The Mirror of Mind), tries to give a 'Map of Knowledge' to cover human expression in all its forms, beginning with the most primitive activity, Art, and going in an ascending scale through Religion, Science, History, to the highest activity, Philosophy. (Cp. Sir James Jeans's sentence quoted on p. 220).*

**A**S thought, in its most rudimentary form, is art, so action in its most rudimentary form is play. The æsthetic consciousness frames to itself an object which is not asserted but only imagined; that is to say, the distinction between truth and falsehood does not matter to it, and its object is what it is only because it capriciously chooses to have it so. But this is the very definition of play; which is that form of action in which the will is untroubled by any question as to right and wrong, expedient or inexpedient, and chooses an end which is an end only because it is thus irresponsibly chosen. The end in play is not chosen as right, or chosen as useful, or chosen as correct, conventional, customary; it is simply chosen. *Hoc volo, sic iubeo; sit pro ratione voluntas*; the will is here an irrational will in the sense that it can give no reason for its choice, precisely as the æsthetic consciousness can give no reason for its imaginings.

Yet there is a reason, in both cases alike. The autonomy of the æsthetic spirit is an illusory autonomy,

for it is rooted in facts of which it does not give itself an explicit account; and just as, from an artist's historical position, we can explain the origin of his artistic prepossessions and outlook, so we can give an explanation of the origin and, as it were, the unconscious motive of any game. We can show how the games of young animals and of children anticipate the serious work of life and train them unawares to meet the problems which will face them later; and in the games of grown men we detect the expression of ancestral instincts which civilized life on its more serious side fails to satisfy. But all such explanations of play are in part mythological and forced, because they ascribe to it motives which the player, by his very character as a player, does not feel. From its own point of view play is motiveless, immediate, intuitive; what motive it has is implicit only.

Art and play are the theoretical and practical forms of the æsthetic consciousness. But because the distinction of will and intellect, being a merely abstract or ideal distinction, does not become explicit till we reach the level of scientific thought, art and play can only be distinguished from a scientific, and not from an æsthetic, point of view. From inside the æsthetic consciousness, no distinction between them can be seen. Thus, from the child's point of view, all playing is playing 'at' something – playing at robbers, at bears, and so forth – which is imaginative or dramatic personification; and thus the famous identification of art with play, which has so scandalized scientific theorists is due not to a philosopher but to an artist, Schiller.

Schiller's identification has often been rejected because art is a high and serious thing and play a childish and trivial; or because art is a thing of the spirit and play a thing of the body, its source the mere exuberance

of physical energy, its aim merely physical pleasure. But these antitheses are totally false. Serious art is serious and trivial art is trivial; children's games are for children and men's games for men. But as children are naturally and instinctively artists, so they naturally and instinctively play; and as art for grown men is something recaptured, a primitive attitude indulged in moments of withdrawal from the life of fact, so play is for grown men something to be done as a legitimate and refreshing escape from 'work.' Yet the distinction of play from work does not consist in its being less hard; children work astonishingly hard at their games, which do not on that account cease to be games; and many a man works harder on the football field or on the north face of Scafell than ever he worked in his office. The refreshment and relaxation of play are purely spiritual; they result from the fact that play is capricious, that in it we choose our end for no conscious reason whatever. Hence it is a complete mistake to suppose that play is the overflow of mere physical energy and aimed at merely physical pleasure. It ought, since the work of Plato and Aristotle on the subject, to be impossible for anyone to speak of merely physical pleasure; and to use such language in describing the 'feel' of one's skin after bathing is merely a sign of careless analysis, however truthfully one may plead ignorance of the *Philebus* and the *Ethics* in excuse. Certainly, one could not sail a boat in half a gale unless one had a body; neither, for that matter, could one paint a picture. And the pleasure, which in neither case is unmixed, but is always a struggle with and a triumph over pain, is in both cases equally spiritual.

The prejudice against play on this double head is therefore groundless. What may legitimately be said in depreciation of all play is precisely what may be

said against art as such: namely that it is a primitive, innocent and childlike attitude, one which has not faced the problems of life and seems to transcend them only by evading them. Yet for this very reason play, like art, gives one a foretaste, as it were, of that condition in which the mind will be when it has faced its problems and conquered them. The innocent soul that has not sinned is merely immature and ignorant compared with the sinner who has repented and been saved; yet innocence is a foretaste of salvation and far liker to salvation than it is to sinning. So art and play have something in them which though not really divine is a likeness of divinity; and God may be pictured as an artist, or as playing, with far more verisimilitude than as a scientist or a business man. Aristotle actually raised the question whether play might not be considered a good definition of God's activity; and the only reason why it cannot is that the *sit pro ratione voluntas* of play is below the claims of expediency and right, the action of God above them. God's will, the will of absolute mind, chooses its ends simply because it chooses them; but this choice includes every possible kind of rationality in itself. Thus to describe God as playing is to make a mockery of man, who must not play; and to degrade God to a level below that of his creatures.

The enjoyment of play is sensuous, precisely as far as, and in the same way in which, that of art is sensuous: where sensuous means intuitive, immediate, innocent of explicit reason. So the pursuit of play is capricious, like that of art; and individualistic, like that of art. Play in its simplest form is the solitary play of the child, which plays 'peep-bo' to itself with a cradle blanket at the age of a few months; in a more complex phase the player, like the artist, wants an audience; and later still

he wants competitors. Competition, which is sociability seen from the standpoint of individualism, is the form which sociability most naturally takes in play: and the same thing reappears in the intellectual individualism of the economic life. When team-play, the play of the cricket or football match, begins, we have reached a high point in the development of play and one at which individualism is beginning to be transcended.

The love of adventure for its own sake, which leads some men to eat their lunch out of doors and others to die in the antarctic winds, is justified by no moral or utilitarian standard, but by an æsthetic standard. It is not because it is right or because it is useful that we indulge it in ourselves and commend it in others, but because it is beautiful, *dulce et decorum* even to the last extremity. That a man who had studied the poets all his life should die looking at the sunrise from high up on Monte Rosa is itself a poem; and the adventure of love is the mother of poetry because it is already poetry, because the lover's unreasoning choice of his beloved is an act of play no less than the climbing of a mountain; high and serious play, both of them; play in which life and health are staked against the joy of the game and the faith in a training that has schooled one to play well. Of play, as of art, the justification is its own splendour. After listening to the tale of the Mount Everest expedition of 1922, told with modest eloquence and illustrated by an unforgettable lantern-show, a sharp-faced middle-aged lady was heard to remark: 'Well, *I* should like to know what's the use of it all.' Use? the use of sunsets and symphonies, of children's games and lovers' kisses, of swimming in starlit water or finding a new way up the Pillar? One can only reply, as a certain midshipman, questioned as to the use of

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battleships, is said to have replied, that they are 'no damned use at all.'

But the lady's question is provocative of swear-words just because it is right and unanswerable. All play, even the most splendid, is only play. Beyond it and above it stands the world of utility, and above that again the world of duty. Children play because they have not learnt to take up the burden of life, because they are too young to work and weep: their very sorrows are the sorrows of fancy, and of the real sorrows that stand round their cradle they know nothing. And those of every age who permit themselves to play are permitting themselves to forget that there are duties waiting to be done and evils crying out for correction all round them. Nor is it an answer to protest that the bow cannot always be bent, that the overstrained spirit must be allowed some relief from the burden of its responsibilities; for these responsibilities, properly understood, are nothing but its own highest and freest life, and to face them is to find, not to sacrifice, our happiness.

The true defence of play is the same as the defence of art. Art is the cutting edge of the mind, the perpetual outreaching of thought into the unknown, the act in which thought eternally sets itself a fresh problem. So play, which is identical with art, is the attitude which looks at the world as an infinite and indeterminate field for activity, a perpetual adventure. All life is an adventure, and the spirit of adventure, wherever it is found, can never be out of place. It is true that life is much more than this; it is never, even in its most irresponsible moments, a mere adventure; but this it is; and therefore the spirit of play, the spirit of eternal youth, is the foundation and beginning of all real life.

From *Speculum Mentis* (1924)

## NOTES

### I. LUXURY (A. E. COPPARD)

*Outlook.* Sense of the significance of everything in life, even the smallest, most ordinary things: a keen, universal interest: child-like in many senses – in minute observation, in flashes of imagination and intuition, in inconsequence. A dalliance round the fringe of consciousness, giving an effect of intense affectation: but this is not overdone: the whole is very subtle, sophisticated and convincing.

*Style.* There is a mixture here – of impressionism, everyday metaphor, artful carelessness: an undress style: syntax and grammar and normal vocabulary ('cruddled,' 'teetered') don't matter: but there are lapses into the conventional ('as if the soul of that frustrating oatmeal lay there between the leather and the blade' might have been written by Dickens; cp. 'to obviate the inconvenience . . . from its defective roof'), where the child-like directness is forgotten: the realism is effective and all the details ring true (cp. the effect of coming in from sunlight, and the description of early morning dust).

The story had no pattern until the last sentence, when the whole recoils on itself and forms a perfect round like a snake biting its tail.

He always *tells* his stories (he always calls them 'tales,' and his style is a story-telling style, with plenty of 'and's' and loose connection, naive additions and afterthoughts – look at the second page): full of sentences piled up and spun out, not thought out in advance: crisp, trim phrases that smack their mouths at you – 'a wedge of newly-cut cake,' 'scooped up a clot of manure,' and compelling phrases like 'surreptitious beer,' 'scatter-brained roses,' 'stark, almost gritty sunlight.'

*Affinities.* Modernist in style, but owning no perceptible allegiance, cp. with Katherine Mansfield in style: shares

the naïve fantastic imagination of James Stephens and his shrewd interest in things: his world is unaffected by the age in which he writes.

## II. BANK HOLIDAY (KATHERINE MANSFIELD)

*(Katherine Mansfield died in 1923)*

*Outlook.* That of an open-eyed, fascinated observer: but anxious to see as much colour and variety as possible in everything: to paint a picture, but an impressionistic picture: like many moderns she says, not 'This is what life is like,' but 'That is how life seems to me': it reminds one of van Gogh and Cézanne in the subjectivity of its colouring.

*Style.* Abrupt, vivid; above all, experimental: modernistic, preoccupied with the subjective (cp. 'ribbons of tune,' 'the reluctant flute'), but not always successful ('the pink spider of a hand beats the guitar' is not good): the vision often deliberately distorted as in some modernist painters and sculptors: much exaggeration ('tries to saw the fiddle in two,' 'a crowd eating oranges and bananas'): often straining after effect: the metaphors are of the hit-or-miss variety ('pink spider of a hand,' '... dusty pin-cushions,' 'a flying day') the similes feel their way and sometimes don't get there ('... blunted fishes,' 'like little children caught . . .' 'like flies at the mouth of a sweet-jar'): yet the whole effect is brilliant and fascinating.

Staccato sentences: immediacy of perception; splashes of colour – the whole like a wet canvas painted in quick jerks: would revision have left e.g. ' . . . full, bright, dazzling radiance ?'

*Affinities.* In her keen but detached observation she is with such moderns as Aldous Huxley and Ernest Hemingway: for style cp. Christopher Morley, even E. E. Cummings: like David Garnett, Virginia Woolf, and many of the modern novelists, she explores and does not judge.

## NOTES

### III. THE FLIGHT (DAVID GARNETT)

*Outlook.* Intent objectivity: passionless attention: concentration on reality: attitude of the trained observer: explores life without moralizing.

*Style.* Precise, clear-cut: without officiousness, log-style: no waste, decks cleared for action: terse simplicity without aiming at anything but the direct: unpretentious: no unnecessary ornament: eye on the object, and no fine writing: gives the impression that he is the pilot (cp. his later *A Rabbit in the Air*) and the reader his passenger: taut: communicates the sense of strain: we share his exploration as he goes along: therefore we are always in the present and always engrossed.

*Affinities.* In absence of comments and moralizing compare many modern novelists, e.g. H. E. Bates, Sylvia Townsend Warner, Katherine Mansfield, Proust, Dorothy Richardson (though the last two are obsessed with the introspective). In style cp. with Hemingway, H. E. Bates, T. F. Powys.

(N.B. — David Garnett has become famous for his inauguration of the 'into' school by his *Lady into Fox*, which tells of the metamorphosis of a nineteenth-century lady into a fox — all in the most matter-of-fact way. Cp. his *Man in the Zoo*, which is more satisfying because completely rationalized.)

### IV. MRS. ALDWINKLE COLLECTS A NEW DEPENDENT (ALDOUS HUXLEY)

*Outlook.* Analytic curiosity: merciless exposure of humbug: 'truth' before sentiment: sense of the complexity of life: isolated characters treated as puppets, meaningless apart from the whole: semi-ironical, but keenly interested in the movements and gestures of these puppets: a bizarre, exaggerated character-drawing: mockery of all affectation and cant: original to the point of eccentricity. Dissective: a scourger: a satirist, not a preacher.

*Style.* Copious: heterogeneous, with many facets: adjectives always on the target ('abrupt, grassy slope,' 'grey,

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'luminous shadow,' etc.): mixture of slang and erudition: he can write so harshly as 'set against a semi-circle of cypresses, and so damningly as 'classy chats about the cosmos': expressive rather than elegant (cp. 'wamblingly'); eccentric, evocative intuitions (cp. 'a tall pompous doorway cavernously invited,' 'smiling as it were beneath the surface of her face,' 'she dragged me through room after baroque room, then drove me up dark stairs into the Middle Ages').

A fluid style: an unending interest, not so much in visual detail as in the byways of thought: master of irony and bathos: a cold, penetrative glitter.

In this book there is more impishness than in his others, which are more bitter and destructive.

*Affinities.* In his outlook, disillusionment, contempt of modern standards, he is a reflection of the Post-War generation (cp. Rose Macaulay, D. H. Lawrence, Richard Aldington and others); in the fineness of his perception and the precision of his thinking cp. Virginia Woolf, Marcel Proust (though Proust is almost entirely introspective). In style cp. these last three.

## V. THE DEATH OF A PHILOSOPHER

(JAMES STEPHENS)

*Outlook.* Fanciful, intuitive: 'Celtic' poetic imagination: springing with incidental humour: consciousness of Irish fairy atmosphere: child-like directness, with very serious play, as play is serious to a child: definitely Irish: N.B. the hints of method in this delightful madness: there are many pieces of earnest wisdom and unobtrusive satire.

*Style and Content.* Fresh, exciting: individual: whimsical. naïve clearness: N.B. the crisp perfection with which the cheap-Jack philosophical rhetoric is delivered – with some really arresting points ('Time is the tick of a clock,' 'Good and Evil are two peas in one pod'): similarly in the glib utterance of the other philosopher we find e.g. 'Goodness and kindliness are perhaps beyond wisdom': simple sentences,

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simple diction: effective writing, no padding: N.B. the colour of Irish common speech (e.g. 'cooking your breakfast in the grey morning,' '... wander abroad on a night of stars'): N.B. the art of climax in the philosophers' speeches, and such juxtapositions as 'Life is a petticoat about' death. I will not go to bed.'

*Affinities.* Cp. J. M. Synge (e.g. *The Tinkers' Wedding*, *The Playboy of the Western World*), Sean O'Casey (e.g. *Juno and the Paycock*), W. B. Yeats (*Early Stories*).

## VI. THE OTHER SIDE OF THE HEDGE

(E. M. FORSTER)

*Style and Method.* An allegory: a parable told as good parables should be – in the style of the good philosopher: clearness above all, without distracting ornament: a plain style with the wealth in the meaning not the language: sure and always making for a definite objective, the whole clearly-thought-out before: a quiet, open-vowelled style with simple syntax: yet without harshness or jar – reads as a translation of Plato reads: a certainty of touch ('brown, crackling hedges,' 'the odour of invisible hay,' 'the stars piercing the fading sky') and poetry (cp. 'The blue sky was no longer a strip . . . to constraint').

*Meaning.* The road is the practical life – the utilitarian, ambitious competitive world; the other side is the life of the spirit, the contemplative world with a paradise of perfect relationships. For Mr. Forster the active life seems too often an excuse for not thinking or for muddled thought: the full life is a life that does not shirk emotion, and 'love,' the ultimately real thing, is a stretching out into the unseen from the narrow limits of the self.

*Affinities.* For attitude cp. Mr. Charles Morgan: style – quiet traditionalist, with an occasional lyrical note.

## VII. KEBREN'S DILEMMA (GEORGE MOORE)

(George Moore died in January 1933)

*Outlook.* Calm, kindly feeling for humanity: a brooding wisdom: seeing life steadily and seeing it whole.

*Style and Method.* It is difficult to point to particular elements in his style: there seems to be no conscious artifice here: a more perfect fusion of style and content would be hard to imagine: the pervading characteristic of his work is its deep feeling, its utter wisdom of life. Kebren, Biote, Otanes are eternal patterns, but they are also individual beings and live not only in a world of hope and faith and fear but in the world of pots and pans, of markets and counting-houses and ships with such names as ships always have. Consequently the style, always quiet and beautifully rhythmed is no mere bloodless ætheriality, but embraces and assimilates all the trivial utterance of everyday life: assimilates – because over all there rests a great dignity and with it a faint flavour of something old-fashioned like lavender in clean linen. The wisdom is one that we must venerate not merely because it is so great and real but also because its author's age commands an instinctive respect: in his attitude to life there is something of the perfect grandfather in him: he understands his grandchildren and knows all their microcosm, but himself belongs to another age. And he is a consummate artist.

In his style there are no modern strivings, no purple patches; all is effortless sincerity. N.B. *Aphrodite in Aulis* provides an interesting study in selection of incident and time.

*Affinities.* In style, especially in earlier works, influenced by the French 'realists' of the Flaubert school: for the long, swaying rhythms compare Proust: his extreme sensitiveness is reminiscent of the Russians Tolstoy and Turgeniev: in English literature he stands alone.

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### VIII. LEWIS AND NARWITZ MEET (CHARLES MORGAN)

*Outlook.* That of the artist and philosopher combined, with the artistic element predominant: a consciousness that the world of the spirit means more than the world of action, together with a consciousness that life, as seen by the sensitive observer, is articulated by patterns formed by the interaction of these two worlds: this dualism is never really reconciled: i.e. there is a strong sense of tragedy. An idealist, then, with a strong sense of reality. (Cp. his *Portrait in a Mirror*.)

*Style.* Dreamlike in its slow majestic movement: rich, deep: slow-motion: even the colloquial interludes have the air of being suspended in time: a confident style without modernism or striving: very personal in an abstract sort of way: classic, resourceful diction: searched-out images: a Platonic turn of thought and speech (see esp. the passage about death).

*Affinities.* Conservative: for style cp., perhaps, Percy Lubbock and other classic traditionalists: for outlook, freedom from contemporary world and pre-occupation with ultimate values, cp. E. M. Forster.

### IX. ARNOLD SEES HARRIET AGAIN (REBECCA WEST)

*Outlook.* A bright, live mind looking out upon an attractive universe: toying delicately with problems of psychological affinities and human intuitions: assertive of the strengths of feminism: some gentle satire on Man and his affairs, which a conscious superiority enables her to regard on occasion with a kind of motherly amusement: general susceptibility to beauty: a light, happy touch: intellectualist.

*Style.* Smooth-flowing, rounded outlines, periodic: accomplished: witty and tastefully wrapped up: but wanton, full of fresh, charming conceits (cp. Winter's monologue on seasonal technique): full of apt thoughts verging on the epigrammatic

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('the more mannered elegancies of Kensington Park'): neat similes ('His mind shook itself like a dog'): richness to the point of artificiality: an 'all-in' rather than a 'leaving out' style: some intimations of journalism (e.g. 'human attempts at acuity').

*Affinities.* Modernist but not disillusionist (e.g. Aldous Huxley) or precious-modernist (e.g. the Sitwells): for the selfish brightness cp. James Stephens: in style conservative in outline, but with a modernist feeling for evocative images (cp. Charles Morgan).

### X. THE SCENT OF BLOOD (D. H. LAWRENCE)

*Outlook.* Intense awareness of the physical world, of physical life, motion and strength: sympathy with all life accompanied by a resignation to the cruelty of things. All his work is a vindication of the natural instincts repressed in modern civilization. For Lawrence sex is the great vitalizing factor in life and his mission was to preach a purified conception of sex. He was and still is misunderstood, and the passion which he threw into his mission often led him into bitterness and spite, but he was an idealist and a prophet.

*Style.* Vivid, vigorous: keen eye, keen ear: good narrative – short, unaffected sentences, speed and instantaneity (cp. the lyrical exuberance of some later passages in this work): no elaborate syntax: N.B. rhythmic effects of varying sentence-lengths: masculine, homely English, with an element of poetic sensitiveness.

This is the early Lawrence: the later work is more inclined to truculence, garrulousness and extravagant assertiveness.

*Affinities.* A rebel against society, like Aldous Huxley, Ernest Hemingway and others, but quite different in that he is diametrically opposed to their cosmopolitan modernism and makes for a new barbarism: in this respect perhaps Richard Aldington is nearer him. An originalist in style.

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### XI. GEORGE'S REVERIE (CHRISTOPHER MORLEY)

*Outlook.* Emotional-sentimental: sensitive to the imperfections of human relationships: sense of the mystery of life: eagerness for an elusive beauty and happiness: flashes of poetic intuition: the faint melancholy of a never-ending pursuit.

*Style.* Modernist, semi-artificial, highly sophisticated: many-flavoured, capricious: experimental: yearning, trying to make words do more than they can: resultant uneasiness: much metaphor, often strained: verbs ill-treated ('sprawled.' 'sheeted . . .', 'chinned himself,' 'streamed with light'): archaic words for effect ('laved,' 'satient,' 'swink').

*Affinities.* For general outlook cp. C. E. Montague, but there are some reminiscences of Sir J. M. Barrie: style has some similarities to that of Montague (cp. also Ivor Brown), but is more modernist and experimental.

### XII. THE ESCAPE (ERNEST HEMINGWAY)

*Outlook.* A nakedness to life: hard perception of reality, a grimness that compared with the traditional approach suggests despair and casualness, but is rather open-mindedness and open-eyedness: a stripping of all wrappings: but there is no distortion (though to some his revolt from the sentimental may seem to lead to a brutality).

*Style.* A staccato style: short, hard sentences with a clear, metallic ring: very much on the spot: it does achieve motion and vividness: careful word economy, simplicity: style as stark as his outlook is frank: its simplicity and directness give it an intense objectivity: the author loses himself in the object (contrast Christopher Morley's writing, where the reader is perpetually in the author's mind): N.B. the extreme rarity of complex syntax (see first paragraph).

*Affinities.* In outlook a product of the post-war generation (cp. Richard Aldington): in style, though this is free from affectations, there is some little affinity with the Imagists (as

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will be seen by comparing this extract with that from E. E. Cummings): cp. Sherwood Anderson: here is a ruthlessly honest and logical mind working with the tools of Impressionism.

### XIII. UNDER ARREST (E. E. CUMMINGS)

*Outlook.* Whimsical: the mind lies open to catch all chance fancies that hang about the fringes of consciousness: not so much a lack of discipline as a scrupulous respect for all the odds and ends of mind-content: an attempt at psychological realism: not fantasy, which is pure creation, but rationalized receptivity. See Robert Graves's *Introduction to the English edition*.

*Style.* Impressionist: a medley of objective and subjective: much that is clear and graphic, but interlarded with personal reactions and allusions that are often obscure to the reader: imagist, i.e. he tends to use words as a painter uses colour, as a plastic material (e.g. 'HurryHurryHurry'): but there is much poetry here, too.

There is much pretence at simplicity, but it's not really simple, but highly sophisticated, with a complicated background showing through, leaving an impression of preciosity: but amusing and stimulating like reading an interesting diary.

*Affinities.* Ultra-modernist (as in his poetry), (cp. Edith Sitwell's verse, some of T. S. Eliot's, Ezra Pound; cp. James Joyce, Gertrude Stein, who carry the method to an extreme): in his avoidance of moral comment he is with many other moderns.

### XIV. OVERTURE (C. E. MONTAGUE)

*Outlook.* Fervent optimism: eagerness to enjoy life to the full, but honestly – in work and in play: thankfulness for the goodness of life: exploitation of well-stored, happy memory: warm enthusiasms: he writes as one who has good news: no limitations or narrowness and few doubts. (Read his other books.)

*Style and Manner.* Full-flavoured, brilliant, matured

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writing: carefully-wrought and burnished, but unforced: allusive (cp. sustained allusiveness of last paragraph), with a wealth of resource: like a golden pattern standing out from a rich background: bookish, but vigorous: scholarly, rhetorical (neat antitheses): cadenced, well-balanced: varied rhythms: eager, expansive: provocative images ('... throw their dusty gloves down on a bed,' 'the first lamps gay in the twilight,' cp. the lines about Waterloo station). Diction assimilates anything that will convey the strongest expression – slang, colloquialisms ('put in a claim upon God,' 'haggle,' 'sneaking,' etc.), modernisms, periphrases, the recherché, the archaic ('champaign,' 'victuals,' 'savoursome'): well-coloured, full of epithets: reminiscent of one of the good, new railway posters: rubs his meaning in.

A fertile mind: breezy, alert (N.B. his exclamation marks), ideas incessantly cropping up: a warm, personal appeal.

*Affinities.* With the traditional: for general manner cp. some of J. B. Priestley's work, also cp. Hilaire Belloc (but Montague has more humour), and Christopher Morley: for style cp. H. M. Tomlinson, Ivor Brown (who at his best has the same feeling for words): also a comparison with some of Jeremy Taylor (say *Holy Dying*) will be interesting.

## XV. URN BURIAL AND BATTLEFIELD (EDMUND BLUNDEN)

*Outlook.* A conscious sympathy with English atmosphere, particularly with the countryside because it has more permanency than the town: a feeling for all objects of the countryside whether beautiful or ugly, rare or humdrum: a facing of reality, no idyllic selection or euphemism: never satisfied with the surface: digs slowly down: solidity, meditative brooding, but tempered by gleams of the airiest poetic fancy: in the main a slow plodding, a travailing to be delivered of utterance.

*Style and Manner.* Partly heavy, suddenly light: baffling, irregular rhythms: generally longish, ponderous sentences:

spondaic sturdiness with cumulative epithets ('square church tower,' 'white-rimed flat dock,' 'red, loop-holed roofs'; read the last sentence in *Battlefield*): occasionally artificial poetic or stilted diction ('tuneful with the rilling play of a ploughland watercourse,' 'posthumous residence'); tendency to personify inanimate objects ('winter with bitter candour,' 'trees lashed their roots round . . . in a cold passion'): makes his own thought about the object rather than the object itself clear to the reader, and yet he takes the reader along with him. (Read his poems: there is a fair selection in Benn's *Augustan Poets*, price 6d.)

*Affinities.* Traditional, with a modern frankness of perception: for tone cp. Siegfried Sassoon's work: also Ralph Hodgson's poems: compare with Montague, but quieter.

## XVI. SHELLEY'S POETRY (W. B. YEATS)

*Outlook.* Critical, fastidious: one poet trying to appreciate another: Yeats, like all the Irish mystics, deeply interested in symbolism, considers Shelley's symbols and is faintly disappointed, but he can understand: the penultimate paragraph is a great declaration of faith of one poet in another: keen and intuitive.

*Style.* Very grave and impressive: sentences well-thought-out and methodical: a considerable overlay of Romanticism (cp. 'It rises and sets for ever over the towers and rivers, and is the throne of his genius'): compelling Irish simplicity of idiom (e.g. ' . . . the growing weary of her'): notice the hints of mysticism in phrases such as 'the children of desire,' 'the wisdom becomes an invisible presence': a sensuous feeling for words as though they were as beautiful as the things they stand for (' . . . as a cold and changeable fire set in the bare heavens,' ' . . . when veiled in mist or glimmering upon water,' ' . . . thin flame burnt in a lamp made of green agate'): notice the solemnity (e.g. 'Some one scene, some one adventure, some one picture'), the persistent thread of

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'and's,' the carefully woven pattern of the penultimate paragraph (he begins with flame and lamp and the central panel revolves round the idea of the mystic Unity, and ends with flame and lamp): notice the lingering fade-out of the essay, as if the whole were a vision conjured up by the magician wand.

*Affinity.* Cp. generally 'A.E.' (especially *Song and its Fountains*) for the same mystic, poetic intuition and even style: cp. the fastidious aestheticism of Oscar Wilde.

## XVII. THE ROMAN ROAD (HILAIRE BELLOC)

*Outlook.* The gospel of solid work, honesty, the open air, for all that abides under the shifting tides of fashion and historical perversity: this extends even to a prejudice against things modern: a tendency to complacency.

*Style.* A deliberate, plain, honest-to-goodness style (cp. 'I bridled him and saddled him and took him out and rode him . . .', 'Behind my house, behind my little farm . . . and then behind it also . . .', 'had come and touched this bough and changed it'): a solid, old-fashioned, Bible flavour, yet self-conscious: a rounded homeliness.

This is a specimen of the essay in which some subject or occasion serves as a peg on which to hang a string of more or less connected thoughts that the writer thinks worth while: it is a sophisticated form, as a careful selection is exercised (contrast the realistic flow of E. E. Cummings): with Mr. Belloc the asides are usually to introduce pieces of very self-assured and self-sufficient wisdom.

A slow, yeoman style: the beer and bacon of the last paragraph are in his style (where, say, Lytton Strachey is French cooking at its artfullest): in attack he uses a bludgeon, where Lytton Strachey uses a rapier: N.B. avoidance of involved periods and modernist trappings.

*Affinities.* With the traditional: generally cp. C. E. Montague (who is broader-minded), some poems of G. K. Chesterton, John Drinkwater, Edmund Blunden (who goes deeper).

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### XVIII. A SENTIMENTAL JOURNEY (IVOR BROWN)

*Outlook.* Open, honest: warm sentiment: optimistic: a flavour of sound sense, a liking for all good things, together with a broad tolerance: a faint flavour of the oracular (cp. the newspaper leader).

*Style.* An easy, open style: but he likes all sorts of literary tricks, even puns: well-seasoned, with many allusions and submerged quotations: full of rhetoric (at times even to the point of cheapness): his writing always seems to be striving for some humorous effect, as though his tongue is in his cheek (less here, perhaps, than usually): a warm, immediately attractive style, but not very exalted.

*Affinities.* Traditional: cp. generally the extracts from *The Times*: cp. for style C. E. Montague, who is, however, richer, more involved and more polished, also Gerald Gould.

### XIX. LEADERS FROM THE TIMES

#### A. GENEVA - LAUSANNE - OTTAWA.

*Attitude.* Stern, authoritative, but not unoptimistic: a profession of openness and impartiality, of seeing both behind the scenes and into the future: oracular, moderate: warning, consolatory: wise and helpful, but non-committal.

*Style.* On the whole the quiet, neutral-tinted style of good exposition, but tending (a) to the periodic (b) to circumlocutions: clear, but slightly inflated, suggestive of an assumed dignity: in the sentence 'There is no need . . . to emphasize the necessity . . . or to dwell on the fact that . . .' there is no reason for inserting 'to dwell on,' except to fill out the rhetorical pattern: but there is much clear thinking, much forceful writing, and no false eloquence: moderate use of metaphor: some pomposity of diction.

#### B. 'HOT BOTTLES' AND 'THE NEW DIARY.'

*Outlook.* Expansive tolerance: genial humour: the atmosphere of mature, cultured middle age, keeping up with the

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times: a staid dignity, with a faint air of condescension that makes the wit when dealing with the trivial somewhat portentous: but shrewd insight into humanity.

*Style.* Journalism at its highest (read the first two sentences of 'Hot Bottles'): highly seasoned – homely English mingled with rhetorical exaggeration and semi-humorous pedantries ('peripheral,' 'pernoctate,' 'angular administrations'): neat, epigrammatic phrasing ('the faint but fateful convexity,' 'insinuatingly calorific,' 'a mobile reserve of bottled firelight,' 'political keyholes'): generally precise and compact, but a love of rather pompous antitheses and doublets ('armies and potentates,' 'nothingness and oblivion,' 'the small and the mediocre,' etc., etc.). N.B. how he plunges into his subject and how tellingly he ends.

## XX. CARLYLE (LYTTON STRACHEY)

*(Lytton Strachey died in 1931)*

*Outlook.* The impersonal, clear-eyed historian seeing all ages of man and all men as so many puppets strutting their little hour upon the stage and ultimately at the mercy of mysterious elemental forces that go to make the great Dynamo of History (Mr. Strachey being the attendant appointed to take the readings): a flavour of irony: with the detachment of a dissector: he is working on the past which is dead and therefore in perfect order.

*Style.* The immediate impression is one of sustained brilliance – of allusion, insight, verbal resource – and it is sustained: go through this essay carefully and mark every touch which pleases you particularly and you will find that you have marked nearly the whole. A modulated style: infinite wealth of thought and phrase, but there is restraint: delicate, fastidious, even in the two purple patches (pages 158 and 165) his step is attuned and precise: sentences well-balanced and neatly-patterned: a master in climax and antithesis, as in paradox and epigram: yet always limpid: N.B. the quiet submerged quotations, the bold metaphors, the flashing Latinisms.

## PROSE AT PRESENT

*Affinities.* A rather French neatness of workmanship and whimsicality: for attitude cp. Aldous Huxley: for style cp. perhaps, Philip Guedalla (read *Bonnet and Shawl*).

### XXI. ETON (PERCY LUBBOCK)

*Outlook.* Happy memory: a warm, evening quiet: soaked in his subject: a mellow searching out of significance: attitude of a man who has more in his heart than he cares to express: a full, thankful heart, without regrets or melancholy.

*Style.* Quiet, not too elaborate: warmth with an inevitable grace: a Platonic fullness: a rich Romantic vocabulary with an admixture of homeliness: carefully poised, happy phrases, a *curiosa felicitas* ('golden finality,' 'blithe to be gone,' 'imperious and incisive speech,' etc., etc.): long sentences, leisurely, piled up: long, slow rhythms: an open, but moderated sentiment: atmosphere of culture: air of meditative talk — the personal feel of the elided negatives — note the magnetic appeal of 'This is Eton's own attitude and natural bearing towards success in the highway — isn't it?'

*Affinities.* Traditionalist: in manner somewhat similar to C. E. Montague and Christopher Morley, but more aristocratic: for Romantic elements cp. W. B. Yeats, but less fastidious: in his feeling for words and phrases cp. C. E. Montague.

### XXII. THE NEW HOUSE (HELEN THOMAS)

*Outlook.* An implicit trust in existence: a deep exultation in all the simple things of life: a feminine, sensitive sympathy: utter sincerity plus simplicity: a resolute belief in the goodness of life: cp. the inspired philosophy of the paragraph beginning 'In an unconscious way. . . .' But it is a wisdom that has come with time.

Here, as she writes, memory with its happy gift of selection has created out of her past, her happiness and tragedy,

## NOTES

'the beautiful pattern of life': memory has spread its crystallizing calm: distance has taken 'the bitterness' from 'the pain,' 'the complacency' from the 'joy': and there is a new happiness in this deep, sensuous attunement to all the chances which life brings, in this appreciation of its pattern.

*Style.* A sensitive, feminine style: a letter style: quiet and confident without striving: like simple, earnest conversation: sentences either short, or, when long, a simple list or recital of things loosely and evenly added. read the description of baking.

It is a good style, because it has no thought of literary style: it is purely spontaneous and simple: since it is a personal, human document and not a literary effort, affinities need not be sought; but the philosophy is the true philosophy of all mortality and the style is the style of all simple poetry.

## XXIII. DIPLOMACY (MAURICE BARING)

*Attitude.* Oracular reminiscence: formal, anecdotal gossip, turned out with an air of detachment as if to say 'This is what I remember as amusing: take it or leave it, as you please,' a man of the world leisureness: the assertive modesty which claims attention: dry humour.

*Style.* Desiccated, effortless: deliberately undistinguished, a diary or conversational style: takes over conventional phrases: a minimum of effort: achieves its effect by the drollery and detachment of its remarks: a series of peeps behind the scenes at varying degrees of closeness (read the last paragraph): easy reading, easily digested as it was meant to be: has the exaggeration and approximation common to most gossip.

*Affinities.* Diarists and memoir-writers (cp. and contrast, say, Pepys, Parson Woodforde, W. H. Davies' *Autobiography of a Super-Tramp*), cp. especially John Drinkwater's *Autobiography, Inheritance, Discovery*, etc.

## XXIV. THE DYING SUN (SIR JAMES JEANS)

*Manner.* That of a patient lecturer: modest, enquiring, true philosophic attitude: he does not pontificate: a reaction from the old arrogant, cut-and-dried scientist: he inspires awe – science as a mysterious and romantic adventure of which everybody should be aware: encourages thinking, imagination, enthusiasm: overwhelming sense of immensity, of being on the verge of a great discovery: Sir James says 'The question at issue is ultimately one for philosophical discussion, but before the philosophers have a right to speak, science ought first to be asked to tell all she can as to ascertained facts and provisional hypotheses.'

*Style.* Methodical and single-minded: sentences short and well-connected: notice the number of explanatory particles: the unit of thought is the paragraph, not the sentence: a model in logical expansion: compelling similes (the monkeys and the typewriters) simple, unaffected diction (cp. 'here and there,' 'littleness,' 'are bound to,' 'some non-ordinary way,' 'atoms plus life').

*Affinities.* For manner cp. Professor A. N. Whitehead, R. G. Collingwood (though Jeans is less brilliant and more sober), Sir A. S. Eddington: in style cp. with the first and last of these writers.

## XXV. PLAY (R. G. COLLINGWOOD)

*Manner.* The philosopher with a gleam in his eye and resolution in his heart intent on a far-seen goal: and anxious not to lose any of his listeners through their faintness of heart: a compelling ardour: analysis and synthesis working hand in hand: an extension of thought to cover everything in theory, to fit all consciousness into a coherent whole from that of the playing baby to God.

*Style.* Abounding vigour: simple language – ordinary words where possible, technical terms only used as they should be used i.e. to recapitulate and to save time: always

## NOTES

lucid: carefully calculated, interweaving of challenging assertions and clear explanation, with plenty of re-statement and summing up: stimulating examples ('the North face of Scafell,' 'Antarctic winds,' 'cradle-blanket,' 'swimming in star-lit waters') which reveal his art - he always completes the picture: he makes philosophy compelling and exciting.

*Affinities.* A particularly original spirit, with scarcely any affinities worth consideration: but cp. with Professor A. N. Whitehead, and with Sir James Jeans.

## QUESTIONS

### I. LUXURY (A. E. COPPARD)

- (i) 'The elaborate simplicities of Mr. A. E. Coppard' (J. B. Priestley). Is this the best two-word epitome? Can you improve on it?
- (ii) What elements precisely in this extract do you find particularly modern?
- (iii) Attempt to recast the story, substituting a winter evening for a summer morning.
- (iv) What do you consider the value of this story?
- (v) What is the relation of the story to its title?
- (vi) By what means does Mr. Coppard achieve at the same time homeliness and freshness?

### II. BANK HOLIDAY (KATHERINE MANSFIELD)

- (i) What is the significance of the last word in this 'story'?
- (ii) Can you gather anything from this about Katherine Mansfield's own attitude towards Bank Holidays?
- (iii) Is it true to say that this study lacks subtlety?
- (iv) Write a similar study of a crowd at a big football match.
- (v) Cp. this piece carefully with the extract from E. E. Cummings in point of realism.
- (vi) '... the late Katherine Mansfield, whose short stories show a real if limited genius.' (J. B. Priestley.) Discuss.

### III. THE FLIGHT (DAVID GARNETT)

- (i) What elements of austerity and aloofness do you find here?
- (ii) Cp. and contrast carefully in point of style with the Hemingway extract.

## QUESTIONS

- (iii) Try to write in the same manner a short, immediate sequel of this episode.
- (iv) By what means does Mr. Garnett achieve the atmosphere of tautness and strain?
- (v) Consider the treatment of scenery. How does it compare with that in any other novels you may know?
- (vi) Consider the diction of this extract. How would you describe the vocabulary here used?
- (vii) Write a careful appreciation of the last two paragraphs.

### *Portrait of the Present*

#### IV. MRS. ALDWINKLE COLLECTS A NEW DEPENDENT (ALDOUS HUXLEY)

- (i) Summarize briefly the character of Mrs. Aldwinkle.
- (ii) Find two or three good examples of the acidity of Mr. Huxley's writing and consider how the effect is achieved.
- (iii) What modernist elements do you find here?
- (iv) Is Mr. Cardan's theory of poetic diction seriously tenable or mere talk?
- (v) Is Mr. Huxley wholly detached in his attitude to his characters? Is his character-drawing effective?

#### V. THE DEATH OF A PHILOSOPHER (JAMES STEPHENS)

- (i) By what means does Mr. Stephens convey the impression of inevitability in the philosophers' speeches?
- (ii) How important an element do you think the humour is here? (Read the book if you can.)
- (iii) Give instances of the freshness of flavour in this style.
- (iv) Write a critical appraisal of the keen of the Grey Woman of Dun Gortin.
- (v) What, do you gather, is Mr. Stephens's attitude to the people in his story?
- (vi) Show how the elements of fantasy and strict reason are here combined.

VI. THE OTHER SIDE OF THE HEDGE  
(E. M. FORSTER)

- (i) Explain the unfolding of this parable step by step.
- (ii) 'The problem is expressed and worked out in terms of art' (Dobrée). Explain and discuss.
- (iii) Describe the successive impressions made upon you as you read this.
- (iv) Analyse the satire of the paragraph, 'The road sometimes doubles....' Discuss the whole as a criticism of modern civilization.
- (v) 'He does not make it too easy and he wants his reader to think out a meaning for himself.' Examine this statement.

VII. KEBREN'S DILEMMA (GEORGE MOORE)

- (i) 'The motion is slow but the reader never becomes impatient.' Is this true ?
- (ii) Is the writing apparently over-wrought or laboured ? Is there any lack of spontaneity ?
- (iii) Consider the character of the direct speech. In what proportion is it used ? With what effect ?
- (iv) Consider carefully the rhythmical devices here used and their contribution to the total effect.
- (v) What sort of atmosphere does this suggest ? Has it any resemblance to that of any historical novels you have read ? Is 'Aphrodite in Aulis' a historical novel ?

VIII. LEWIS AND NARWITZ MEET  
(CHARLES MORGAN)

- (i) What is the atmosphere of this extract ? How achieved ?
- (ii) What new things does Mr. Morgan say about Scholarship, Love, the individual ? Discuss his opinions.
- (iii) Cp. Narwitz's remarks on Death with any other opinions you may have read on the same subject.

## QUESTIONS

- (iv) Try to summarize Narwitz's philosophy of life as here revealed.
- (v) In what ways, if any, do you think Mr. George Moore's writing and Mr. Morgan's are comparable?
- (vi) Try to give examples of the resourcefulness of Mr. Morgan's style? Do you find any artificialities?

### IX. ARNOLD SEES HARRIET AGAIN

(REBECCA WEST)

- (i) 'She wavered slightly, like a steady flame.' Discuss the validity and appeal of this image. Could you suggest others?
- (ii) What is the tone of this extract with regard to London? Cp. it, if you can, with Mr. Galsworthy's London.
- (iii) Consider the qualities of the passage about the riders, and try to rewrite it as a more modernist writer might have written it (e.g. Mr. Hemingway).
- (iv) Would you describe this as a 'purple-patch style'?
- (v) Take the passage beginning "It can all be done in one single line," Winter was saying of the trees. Consider its accuracy and manner. Is it precious, ostentatious, distracting, illuminating, what? In what other authors do you think you might find such a passage?

### X. THE SCENT OF BLOOD (D. H. LAWRENCE)

- (i) Read the paragraph about the rabbit. What literary merits and what attitude does it show? Cp. it in tone with Mr. James Stephens's poem 'The Snare.'
- (ii) What impressions do you form from this extract about Lawrence's character-drawing?
- (iii) What evidence is there here of Lawrence's strong susceptibility to sound?
- (iv) Make a study of the use here of metaphors and similes.
- (v) What is the atmosphere in this extract? Are you aware of any particular tone on the part of the narrator?
- (vi) With what other narrative style in this volume would you compare the style of this extract?

**XI. GEORGE'S REVERIE (CHRISTOPHER MORLEY)**

- (i) Do you find here any suggestions of journalistic writing?
- (ii) Is it a fair criticism to call Mr. Morley's style 'a hot-house product'?
- (iii) Try to 'write up' any piece of scenery you know in the style of the paragraph about the booklet.
- (iv) Show how emotional qualities in this style outweigh the intellectual.
- (v) Evaluate these phrases: 'yellow squares flashed on and off,' 'spinnaker of cloud,' 'thunder yawning,' 'twiggy legs,' 'marbled with foam.'
- (vi) Try to analyse the component parts of the richness of this extract.

**XII. THE ESCAPE (ERNEST HEMINGWAY)**

- (i) Do you consider this a good narrative style? Why?
- (ii) Consider carefully the sentence 'The engine, coming straight on, grew larger slowly.' What points do you notice?
- (iii) Write a careful comparison of this method with that of Mr. E. E. Cummings.
- (iv) Consider Mr. Hemingway's use of adjectives.
- (v) Take the paragraph beginning 'Two carabinieri took the lieutenant-colonel. . . .' Try to rewrite it in the manner of a more old-fashioned novelist.
- (vi) How far does this style differ from the style of Swift (e.g. *Gulliver's Travels*) or from that of Nathaniel Hawthorne? With what justification can it be called a modernist style?

**XIII. UNDER ARREST (E. E. CUMMINGS)**

- (i) Show how in rhythm and punctuation there are in many passages here approximations to free verse.
- (ii) Is it true to say that Mr. Cummings aims not at description but at the communication of sensation?

## QUESTIONS

- (iii) Is the Impressionism here sustained? Show any elements of the conventional method.
- (iv) 'The illusion of a passive mind.' Is this true of the effect of this style?
- (v) Attempt in this style the description of a street accident or a visit to a restaurant.
- (vi) What traces, if any, do you find here of true poetry?

## XIV. OVERTURE (C. E. MONTAGUE)

- (i) What do you gather from this essay about Montague's chief enthusiasms?
- (ii) Analyse the appeal of the last sentence in the penultimate paragraph.
- (iii) Cp. and contrast this essay, in manner, with the extracts from Mr. Morley and Mr. Blunden.
- (iv) Do you notice here any traces of journalistic writing?
- (v) Can you find here any epithets that are unnecessary?
- (vi) Discuss Montague's use of allusion and submerged quotation.

## XV. URN BURIAL AND BATTLEFIELD (EDMUND BLUNDEN)

- (i) Analyse carefully the technique of the sentence (in *Battlefield*) beginning 'A driving rain. . . .'
- (ii) Why did Mr. Blunden withdraw from his archaeological enterprise?
- (iii) Cp. the manner of *Urn Burial* with that of Mr. Belloc's *The Roman Road*.
- (iv) Give examples of the careful workmanship-in-words shown in these essays.
- (v) How far do Mr. Blunden's views on 'posthumous residence' coincide with those of Montague (see last extract)?
- (vi) '... his verse gives such a sense of thwarted achievement' (A. C. Ward). Is this true of this prose?

XVI. SHELLEY'S POETRY (W. B. YEATS)

- (i) Recapitulate the substance of this extract.
- (ii) What elements of poetry do you find here?
- (iii) Cp. this as an expository style with that of Mr. Collingwood.
- (iv) Consider the penultimate paragraph. Is it clear, to the point? What does it tell us about Yeats, and what, if anything, about Shelley?
- (v) Imagine Mr. Yeats speaking in this essay. What is his manner and tone, and what atmosphere does it suggest?

XVII. THE ROMAN ROAD (HILAIRE BELLOC)

- (i) Give examples of 'pieces of self-assured wisdom.' Comment on their validity.
- (ii) What exactly is Mr. Belloc's case against 'the learned men'?
- (iii) Summarize Mr. Belloc's remarks about the Roman character. Discuss.
- (iv) What rhythmical devices are used here?
- (v) Would you say that Mr. Belloc is an optimist?
- (vi) Contrast this extract in atmosphere and tone with that from Mr. Percy Lubbock.

XVIII. A SENTIMENTAL JOURNEY (IVOR BROWN)

- (i) Would you say that Mr. Brown overworks his rhetorical devices?
- (ii) Read Wordsworth's 'Ode on Intimations of Immortality . . .' and discuss Mr. Brown's comments on it.
- (iii) Give examples of Mr. Brown's neatness of phrase, use of metaphor, play upon words.
- (iv) 'One cannot live on epigram alone, much less on cliché.' Does this apply to the present extract?
- (v) Is this a colloquial style?
- (vi) Cp. this essay, in manner, with that entitled 'The New Diary.'

## QUESTIONS

### XIX. LEADERS FROM *THE TIMES*

A. (i) Give examples of obvious rhetorical device here.  
(ii) Do you find here any traces of the cliché, to which journalistic writing is so liable?  
(iii) Give a resumé of this in about 200 words.  
(iv) Suppose that you had to shorten this leader by some 200-300 words. How would you do it?

B. (i) Cp. the style with that of the First Leader.  
(ii) Point out the effectiveness of the sentence, 'A new hat . . . oblivion.'  
(iii) Attempt an essay in similar vein on 'Hats' or 'On keeping a dog.'

### XX. CARLYLE (LYTTON STRACHEY)

(i) Give examples of Strachey's art in climax, antithesis, epigram.  
(ii) Read the purple patch on mid-Victorian England. Write a similar one on pre-war England or present-day America.  
(iii) Do you think the caraway seed simile too drawn-out or really forceful?  
(iv) 'A profound relish for words . . . imaginative eye . . . a grim satiric humour.' Are Strachey's words here true of himself?  
(v) Why is 'Carlyle had no notion that this was the case and the result was disastrous' a bad sentence? Are there any others?  
(vi) 'Mr. Strachey is more in love with analysis than with portraiture, with his method than with man.' (Osbert Burdett.) Discuss.

### XXI. ETON (PERCY LUBBOCK)

(i) What are 'the other falsities into which sentiment tumbles'?  
(ii) Analyse the structure and diction of the first paragraph.

#### PROSE AT PRESENT

(iii) 'There is the right Athenian grace that touches the prettiness of the picture with moderation, keeping it cool and clear.' Is this true of Mr. Lubbock's writing here?

(iv) Think of some lines of, say, Keats or Tennyson of which this style reminds you.

(v) Cp. the appeal of this extract with that of Mr. Ivor Brown's essay in reminiscence.

#### XXII. THE NEW HOUSE (HELEN THOMAS)

(i) 'My utter lack of resignation.' How do you reconcile this with the general tone of the passage?

(ii) Try to write the last paragraph in a more complex style, and compare.

(iii) Can you think of any poems of which this reminds you?

(iv) What conclusion do you draw from the absence of quoted direct speech in this extract?

(v) Do you agree with the last few lines above under Style?

#### XXIII. DIPLOMACY (MAURICE BARING)

(i) What is the importance of the last two sentences for the appreciation of the whole?

(ii) Is this a good narrative style?

(iii) 'This fragmentary screen-show.' Discuss the aptness of this description.

(iv) What traces of acidity do you find here?

(v) What conception of the author's character do you form from this?

#### XXIV. THE DYING SUN (SIR JAMES JEANS)

(i) How does Sir James Jeans communicate 'the overwhelming sense of immensity'?

(ii) Summarize the meaning of this extract in about 200 words.

## QUESTIONS

- (iii) What elements of the dramatic do you find here ?
- (iv) Which sentences here particularly stir your imagination ? By what means do they do this ?
- (v) What differences do you notice between this style and that of the literary essayist ?

## XXV. PLAY (R. G. COLLINGWOOD)

- (i) 'A good sermon-style.' Is this true ?
- (ii) Why, then, do people climb Mt. Everest ?
- (iii) 'That a man who had studied the poets all his life should die looking at the sunrise from high up on Monte Rosa is itself a poem.' Explain in the light of Mr. Collingwood's philosophy.
- (iv) Cp. in style with the passage from Sir James Jeans.
- (v) What characteristics divide this philosophy from that suggested in the extracts from Mr. E. M. Forster and Mr. Charles Morgan ?

## APPENDIX

### I

The discussion and appreciation of the following quotations will, it is hoped, serve as a means of summarizing the impressions received from the study of these extracts.

(i) 'The function of Art is to present the spectator with a completed experience.' Discuss this in reference to the aims of the novelists represented in this book.

(ii) 'The difference between poetry and prose is the difference between lightning and current.'

'The appreciation of poetry begins with the recognition of a truth presented anew in exciting language.' (A. C. Ward.)

What is prose ? and where does its appreciation begin ?  
Give examples from the above extracts.

(iii) 'I conceive that words are like money, not the worse for being common, but that it is the stamp of custom alone that gives their circulation a value.' (Hazlitt.)

'To use words because of their age rather than because of their direct, current meaning is to forego the clear expressiveness of language. All true expression is spontaneous. Style is spontaneity.' (Herbert Read.)

Discuss these statements in conjunction and in reference to the diction of any author you may have particularly noticed in this collection.

(iv) 'A man's style should be like his dress. It should be as unobtrusive and should attract as little attention as possible.' Discuss. Is, then, distinction of style not to be aimed at ?

(v) 'A man who writes, at the top of his powers, from a full mind, is always longing to be shorter than he is.' (C. E. Montague.) Is this true ? Have you noticed this longing in any authors here ?

(vi) 'High lights, half-lights, low lights – all are useful in

## APPENDIX

painting, and so are statement, overstatement and understatement in letters. Given a congenial context, every one of them is right.' (C. E. Montague.) Try to show these methods used in congenial contexts in the above extracts.

(vii) 'What we call intimacy is only a makeshift; perfect knowledge is an illusion. But in the novel we can know people perfectly.' (E. M. Forster.) Discuss in reference to the novelists here represented.

(viii) 'The novelist nowadays has an extraordinarily difficult task; he has lost his background, the old established values, the enduring social customs. The framework has gone.' (Bonamy Dobrée.) How, then, do modern novelists get over this difficulty ?

(ix) 'In our prose-writing we funk it (rhetoric) as our actors funk Shakespeare: and the "purple patch" has become anathema.' (Sir A. T. Quiller-Couch.) What are your views on the 'purple patch'? Illustrate, as far as possible, from these extracts.

(x) 'Metaphor . . . is the synthesis of several units of observation into one commanding image. . . . The use of metaphor tends to obscure the essential nature of prose.' (Herbert Read). Illustrate the first statement from these extracts. Explain and discuss the second.

(xi) 'They (the latest generation of novelists) are commentators rather than creative dramatic artists.' (J. B. Priestley.) Which do you think the novelist should be ?

## II

The following passages from writers of earlier periods are included for general purposes of comparison. The reader is left to draw his own conclusions; but he must be discreet in his use of material so limited.

(i) Take away but the pomps of death, the disguises and solemn bugbears, the tinsel, and the actings by candlelight, and proper and fantastic ceremonies, the minstrels and the noise-makers, the women and weepers, the swoonings and the shriekings, the nurses and the physicians, the dark room and

the ministers, the kindred and the watchers; and then to die is easy, ready and quitted from its troublesome circumstances. It is the same harmless thing that a shepherd suffered yesterday, or a maid-servant to-day; and at the same time in which you die, in that very night a thousand creatures die with you, some wise men, and many fools; and the wisdom of the first will not quit him, and the folly of the latter does not make him unable to die.

JEREMY TAYLOR (1613-1667): *The Rule and Exercises of Holy Dying.*

(ii) Three days after my arrival, walking out of curiosity to the north-east coast of the island, I observed, about half a league off, in the sea, somewhat that looked like a boat overturned. I pulled off my shoes and stockings, and wading two or three hundred yards, I found the object to approach nearer by force of the tide; and then plainly saw it to be a real boat, which I supposed might, by some tempest, have been driven from a ship; whereupon I returned immediately towards the city, and desired his Imperial Majesty to lend me twenty of the tallest vessels he had left after the loss of his fleet, and three thousand seamen under the command of his Vice-Admiral. This fleet sailed round, while I went back the shortest way to the coast where I first discovered the boat; I found the tide had driven it still nearer. The seamen were all provided with cordage, which I had beforehand twisted to a sufficient strength. When the ships came up, I stripped myself, and waded till I came within an hundred yards of the boat, after which I was forced to swim till I got up to it. The seamen threw me the end of the cord, which I fastened to a hole in the fore-part of the boat, and the other end to a man of war; but I found all my labour to little purpose; for being out of my depth, I was not able to work. In this necessity, I was forced to swim behind, and push the boat forward as often as I could, with one of my hands; and the tide favouring me, I advanced so far, that I could just hold up my chin and feel the ground. I rested two or three minutes, and then gave the boat another shove, and so on till the sea was no higher than my arm-pits; and now the most laborious part

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being over, I took out my other cables, which were stowed in one of the ships, and fastening them first to the boat, and then to nine of the vessels which attended me; the wind being favourable, the seamen towed, and I shoved till we arrived within forty yards of the shore; and waiting till the tide was out, I got dry to the boat, and by the assistance of two thousand men, with ropes and engines, I made a shift to turn it on its bottom, and found it was but little damaged.

JONATHAN SWIFT (1667-1745): *A Voyage to Lilliput.*

(iii) The authority of the new sovereign had been ratified by the cheerful submission of the senate and provinces. They exulted in their unexpected deliverance from a hated tyrant, and it seemed of little consequence to examine into the virtues of Caracalla. But as soon as the first transports of joy and surprise had subsided, they began to scrutinize the merits of Macrinus with a critical severity, and to arraign the hasty choice of the army. It had hitherto been considered as a fundamental maxim of the constitution, that the emperor must be always chosen in the senate; and the sovereign power, no longer exercised by the whole body, was always delegated to one of its members. But Macrinus was not a senator. The sudden elevation of the praetorian prefects betrayed the meanness of their origin; and the equestrian order was still in possession of that great office, which commanded with arbitrary sway the lives and fortunes of the senate. A murmur of indignation was heard, that a man, whose obscure extraction had never been illustrated by any signal service, should dare to invest himself with the purple, instead of bestowing it on some distinguished senator, equal in birth and dignity to the splendour of the imperial station. As soon as the character of Macrinus was surveyed by the sharp eye of discontent, some vices, and many defects, were easily discovered. The choice of his ministers were in many instances justly censured, and the dissatisfied people, with their usual candour, accused at once his indolent tameness and his excessive severity.

EDWARD GIBBON (1737-1794): *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire.*

(iv) Mannering now grew impatient. He was occasionally betrayed into a deceitful hope that the end of his journey was near, by the apparition of a twinkling light or two; but, as he came up, he was disappointed to find that the gleams proceeded from some of those farm-houses which occasionally ornamented the surface of the extensive bog. At length, to complete his perplexity, he arrived at a place where the road divided into two. If there had been light to consult the relics of a finger-post which stood there, it would have been of little avail, as, according to the good custom of North Britain, the inscription had been defaced shortly after its erection. Our adventurer was therefore compelled, like a knight-errant of old, to trust to the sagacity of his horse, which, without any demur, chose the left-hand path, and seemed to proceed at a somewhat livelier pace than before, affording thereby a hope that he knew he was drawing near to his quarters for the evening. This hope, however, was not speedily accomplished, and Mannering, whose impatience made every furlong seem three, began to think that Kippletringan was actually retreating before him in proportion to his advance.

SIR WALTER SCOTT (1771-1832): *Guy Mannering*.

(v) In the meantime Mr. Pecksniff, having received from a sharp angle in the bottom step but one that sort of knock on the head which lights up, for the patient's entertainment, an imaginary general illumination of very bright short-sixes, lay placidly staring at his own street door. And it would seem to have been more suggestive in its aspect than street doors usually are; for he continued to lie there rather a lengthy and unreasonable time, without so much as wondering whether he was hurt or no. Neither, when Miss Pecksniff inquired through the keyhole in a shrill voice, which might have belonged to a wind in its teens, 'Who's there?' did he make any reply; nor, when Miss Pecksniff opened the door again, and shading the candle with her hand, peered out, and looked provokingly round him, and about him, and over him, and everywhere but at him, did he offer any remark, or indicate in any manner the least hint of a desire to be picked up.

## APPENDIX

'I see you,' cried Miss Pecksniff, to the ideal inflictor of a runaway knock. 'You'll catch it, sir !'

Still Mr. Pecksniff, perhaps from having caught it already, said nothing.

'You're round the corner now,' cried Miss Pecksniff. She said it at a venture, but there was appropriate matter in it too; for Mr. Pecksniff, being in the act of extinguishing the candles before mentioned pretty rapidly, and of reducing the number of brass knobs on his street door from four or five hundred (which had previously been juggling of their own accord before his eyes in a very novel manner) to a dozen or so, might in one sense have been said to be coming round the corner, and just turning it.

With a sharply-delivered warning relative to the cage and the constable, and the stocks and the gallows, Miss Pecksniff was about to close the door again, when Mr. Pecksniff (being still at the bottom of the steps) raised himself on one elbow and sneezed.

'That voice !' cried Miss Pecksniff. 'My parent !' At this exclamation another Miss Pecksniff bounced out of the parlour; and the two Miss Pecksniffs, with many incoherent expressions, dragged Mr. Pecksniff into an upright posture.

'Pa !' they cried in concert. 'Pa ! Speak, Pa ! Do not look so wild, my dearest pa !'

But as a gentleman's looks, in such a case of all others, are by no means under his own control, Mr. Pecksniff continued to keep his mouth and his eyes very wide open, and to drop his lower jaw, somewhat after the manner of a toy nut-cracker; and as his hat had fallen off, and his face was pale, and his hair erect, and his coat muddy, the spectacle he presented was so very doleful, that neither of the Miss Pecksniffs could repress an involuntary screech.

'That'll do,' said Mr. Pecksniff. 'I'm better.'

'He's come to himself !' cried the youngest Miss Pecksniff.

'He speaks again !' exclaimed the eldest.

With these joyful words they kissed Mr. Pecksniff on either cheek, and bore him into the house. Presently, the youngest Miss Pecksniff ran out again to pick up his hat, his brown

## PROSE AT PRESENT

paper parcel, his umbrella, his gloves, and other small articles; and that done, and the door closed, both young ladies applied themselves to tending Mr. Pecksniff's wounds in the back parlour.

CHARLES DICKENS (1812-1870): *Martin Chuzzlewit.*

### III

The following books will be found useful for further study:

HERBERT READ: *English Prose Style.* Bell.

C. E. MONTAGUE: *A Writer's Notes on his Trade.* Chatto & Windus.

*Tradition and Experiment* (Essays by various hands). Oxford Press.

E. M. FORSTER: *Aspects of the Novel.* E. Arnold.

ANDRÉ MAUROIS: *Aspects of Biography.* Cambridge University Press.

BONAMY DOBRÉE: *The Lamp and the Lute.* Oxford Press.  
(See, especially, the papers on Hardy, Kipling, E. M. Forster, Lawrence).

*Scrutinies* (Vols. i and ii, by various hands). Wishart.

T. S. ELIOT: *The Sacred Wood.* Methuen.

A. C. WARD: *The Nineteen-Twenties.* Methuen.

*The London Book of English Prose* (Ed. Herbert Read and Bonamy Dobrée). Eyre & Spottiswood.

J. B. PRIESTLEY: *The English Novel* (Benn's Sixpenny Series).

SHERARD VINES: *Movements in Modern English Poetry and Prose.* Oxford Press.

H. W. and F. G. FOWLER: *The King's English.* Oxford Press.

